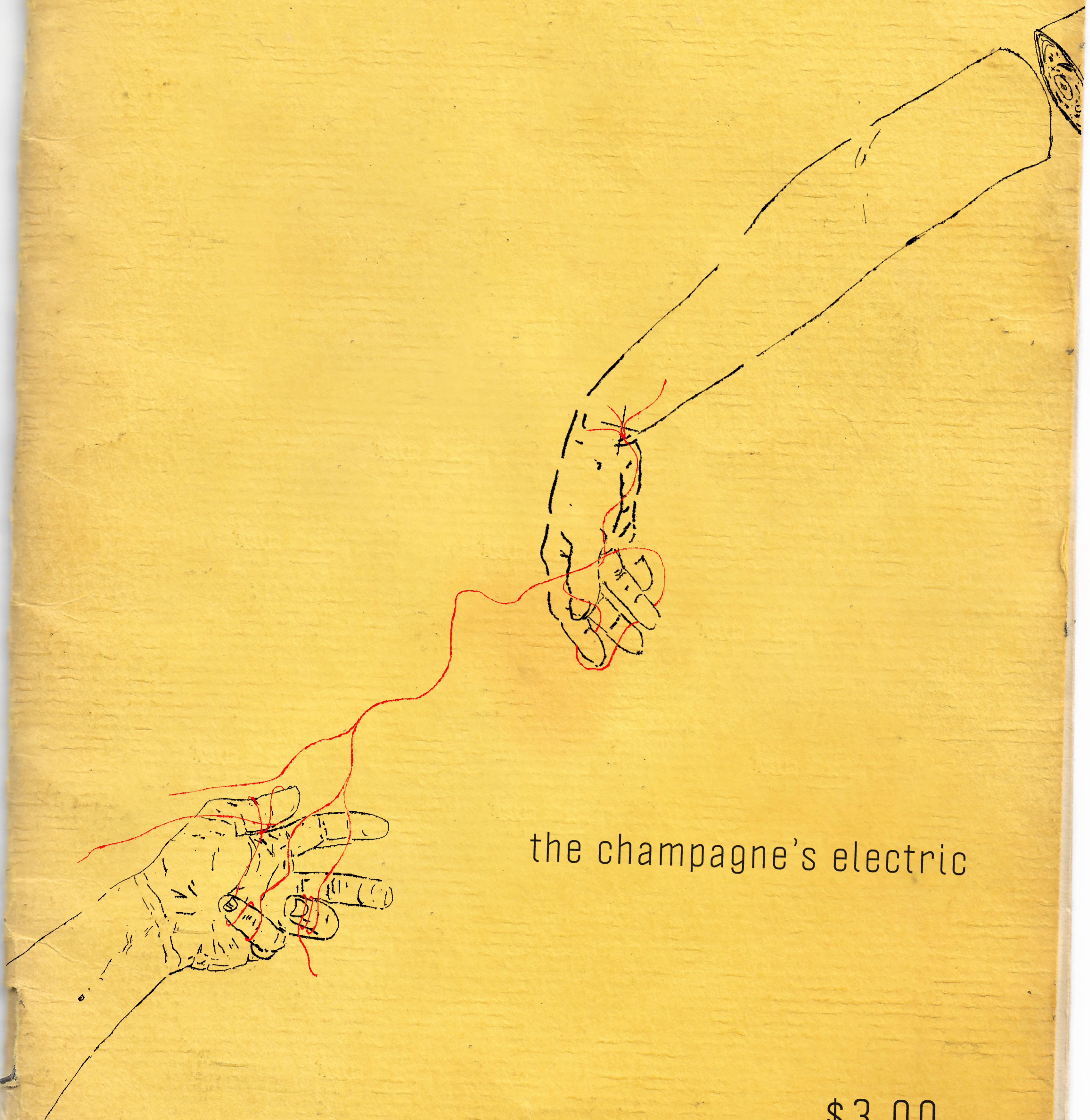


40 ACRES OF VELVETEEN/  
THERE LINGERED A PENICILLIN SCENT  
WHEN THE SIMULACRUM FINISHED COOKING/  
LOVE AND OTHER PLEASANT DELUSIONS



the champagne's electric

\$3.00



This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 2020 The Champagne's Electric.

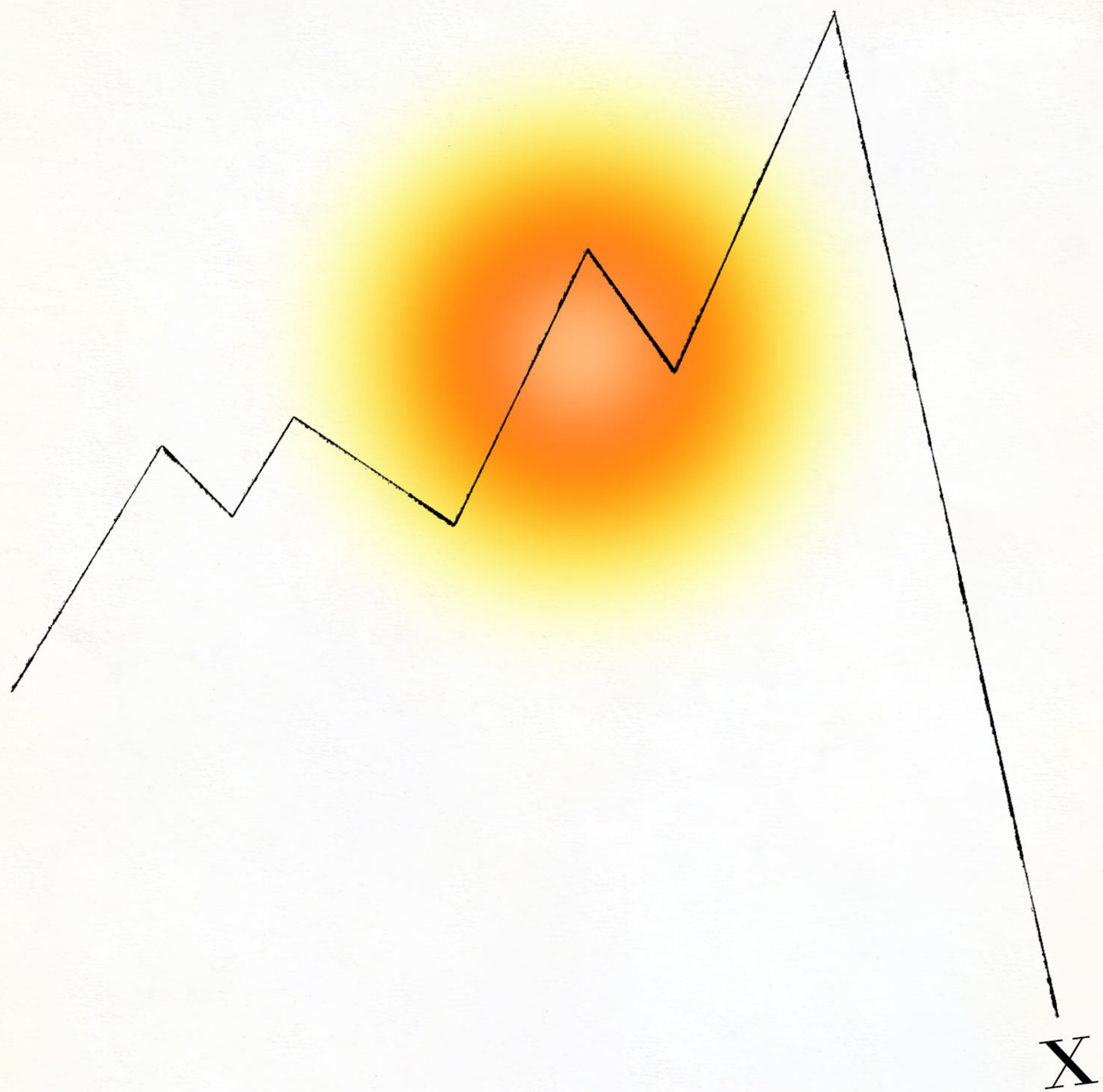
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without written permission of the copyright owner except for the use of quotations in a book review.

First digital edition July 2020

Front cover image by The Champagne's Electric  
Book design by The Champagne's Electric  
Illustrations by The Champagne's Electric

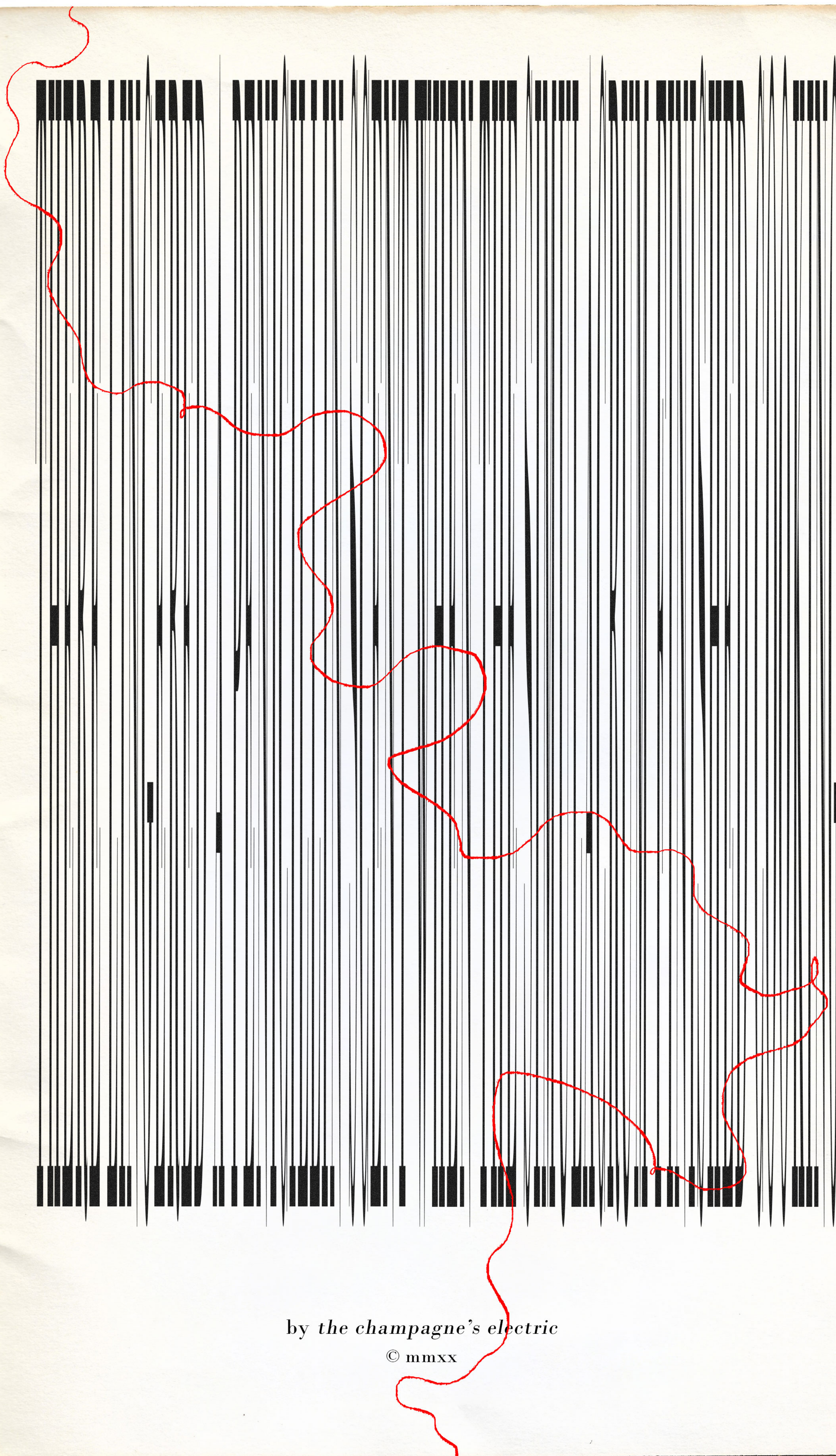
Published by Awful Grace Publishing  
[www.awfulgraceradio.org](http://www.awfulgraceradio.org)  
[contact@awfulgraceradio.org](mailto:contact@awfulgraceradio.org)





*we are more than walls raised  
to echo their century shouts*

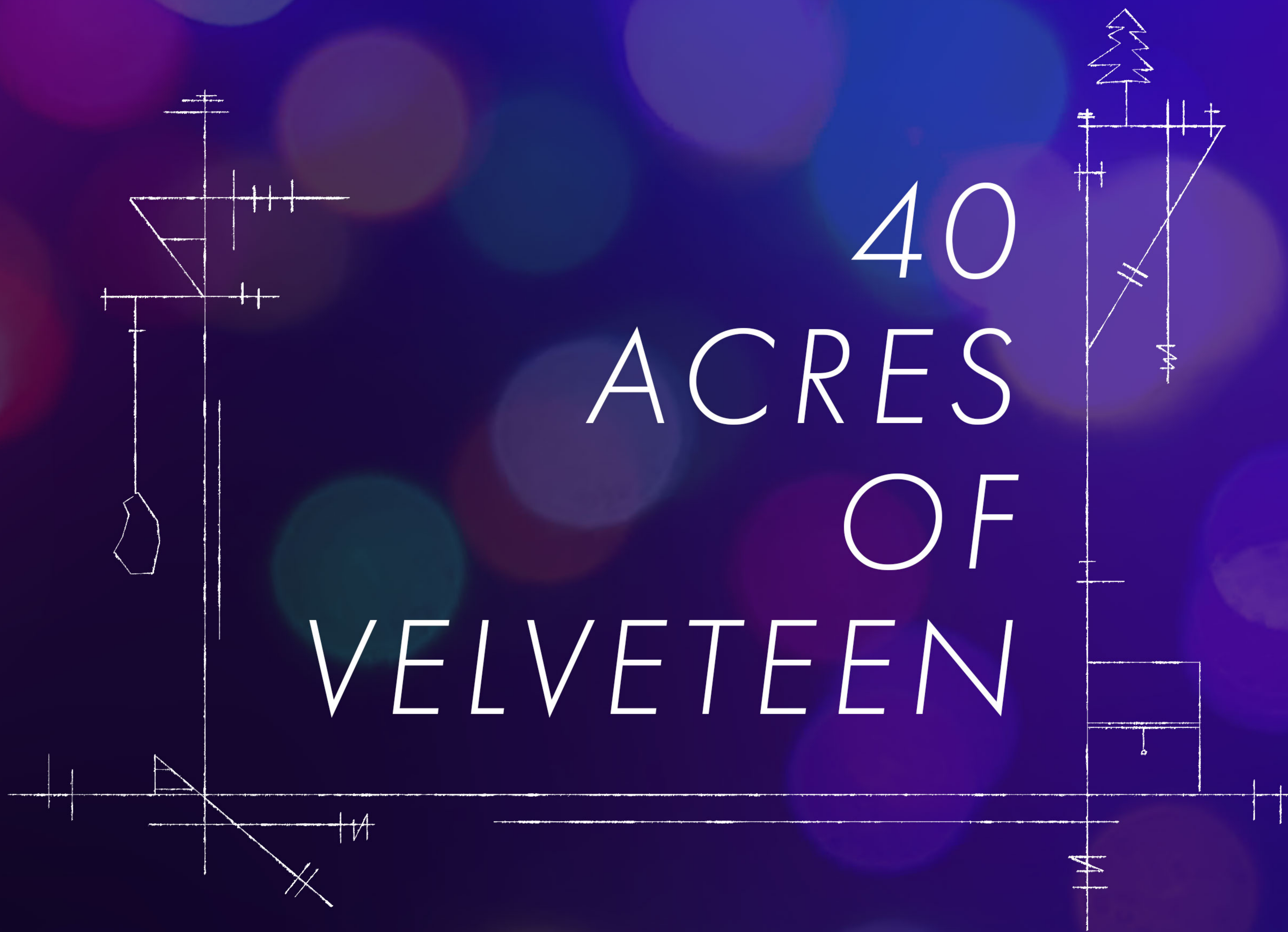




*by the champagne's electric*

© mmxx





# 40 ACRES OF VELVETEEN

or

*THERE LINGERED A PENICILLIN SCENT  
WHEN THE SIMULACRUM FINISHED COOKING*

or

*LOVE AND OTHER PLEASANT DELUSIONS*

by *THE CHAMPAGNE'S ELECTRIC*

©MMXX



table of contents

my first and only true offering on the matter, presented  
under the northwest corner of the moon on an evening of  
otherwise unnoteworthy banality

on the nature of the thing called poetry,  
chilled to pleasance and paired with the eyes of a baby seal

40 acres of velveteen

non nude aphorism 13

*and tatami is rough when you rub the wrong way*

a note i wrote with broken glass at gladys and springfield ave.

non nude aphorism 14

*non nude aphorism 15*

a reliquary of kleenex

non nude aphorism 16

non nude aphorism 17

*think a thought you whorey slut*

as if to undo the fusion of the fontanelle

non nude aphorism 18

saint indignatious

*non nude aphorism 19*

non nude aphorism 20

*a meticulous audit of delusion, from meta to mutual*

my remarks upon your recent graduation, compiled under duress and scribbled on  
a handful of napkins at the international house of pancakes

non nude aphorism 21

*novels in your eyes*

when enough acid is enough acid

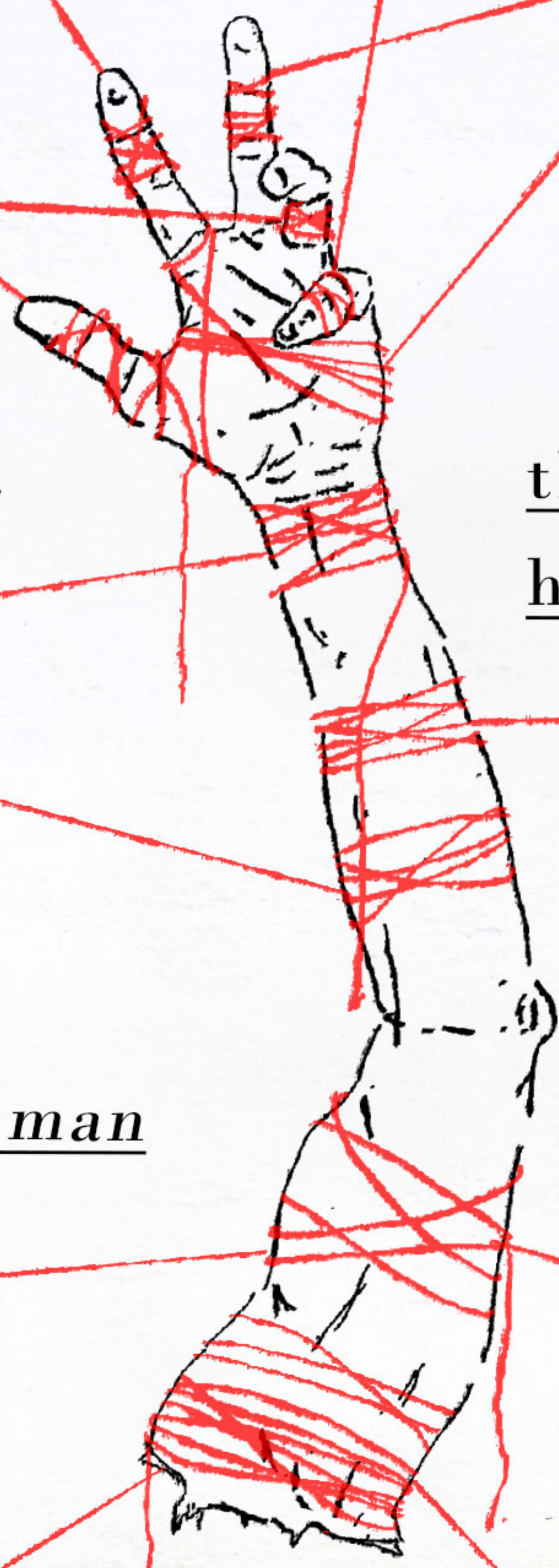
the last thing a liberated mind  
has to say

*non nude aphorisms 22-37*

non nude aphorism 38

timeshares of the deconstructed man

if nothing else, this







MY FIRST AND ONLY  
OFFERING ONLY  
TRULY THE PRESENTED  
THE MATTER, VNDER  
THE NORTHWEST CORNER  
THE MOON OF  
IN THE OTHERWISE  
ON AN EVEN IN  
INNOVATION WITH KAMATI



my first and only true offering on the matter, presented under the northwest  
corner of the moon on an evening of otherwise unnoteworthy banality

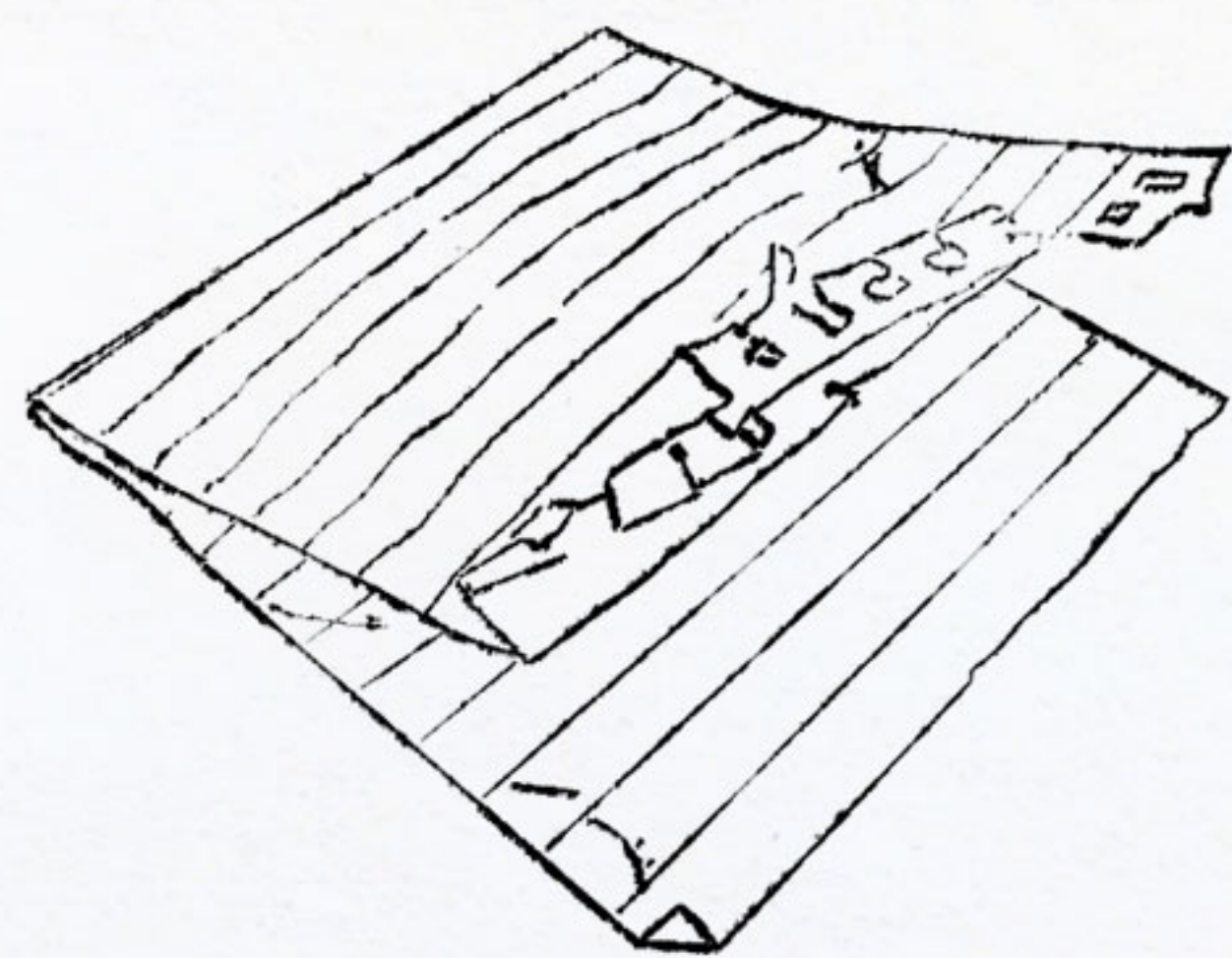
all of man herein

i loved you  
and it wasn't enough

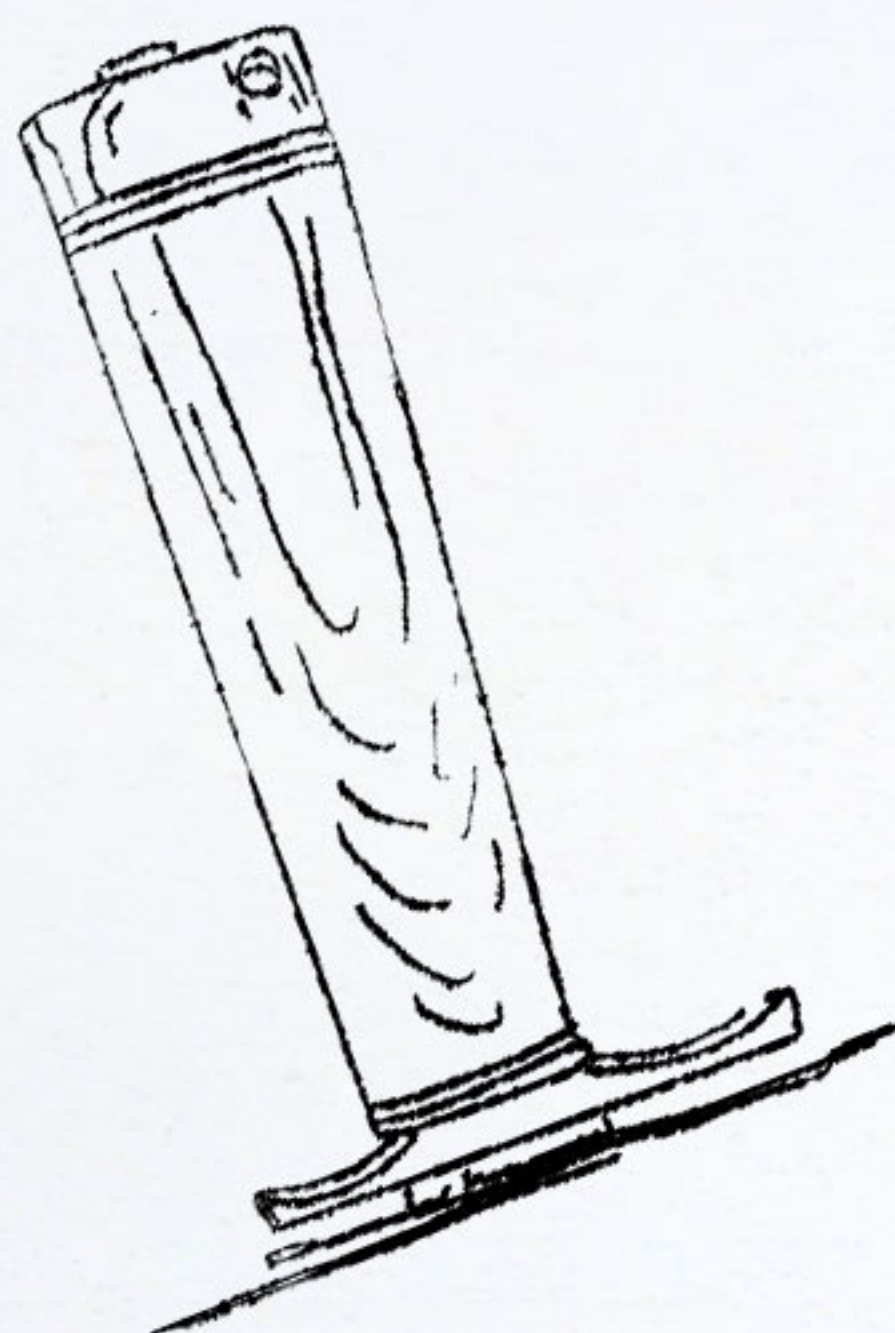


ON THE NATURE OF THE THING CALLED  
POETRY, CHILLED TO PLEASANCE AND  
PAIRED WITH THE EYES OF A BABY SEAL

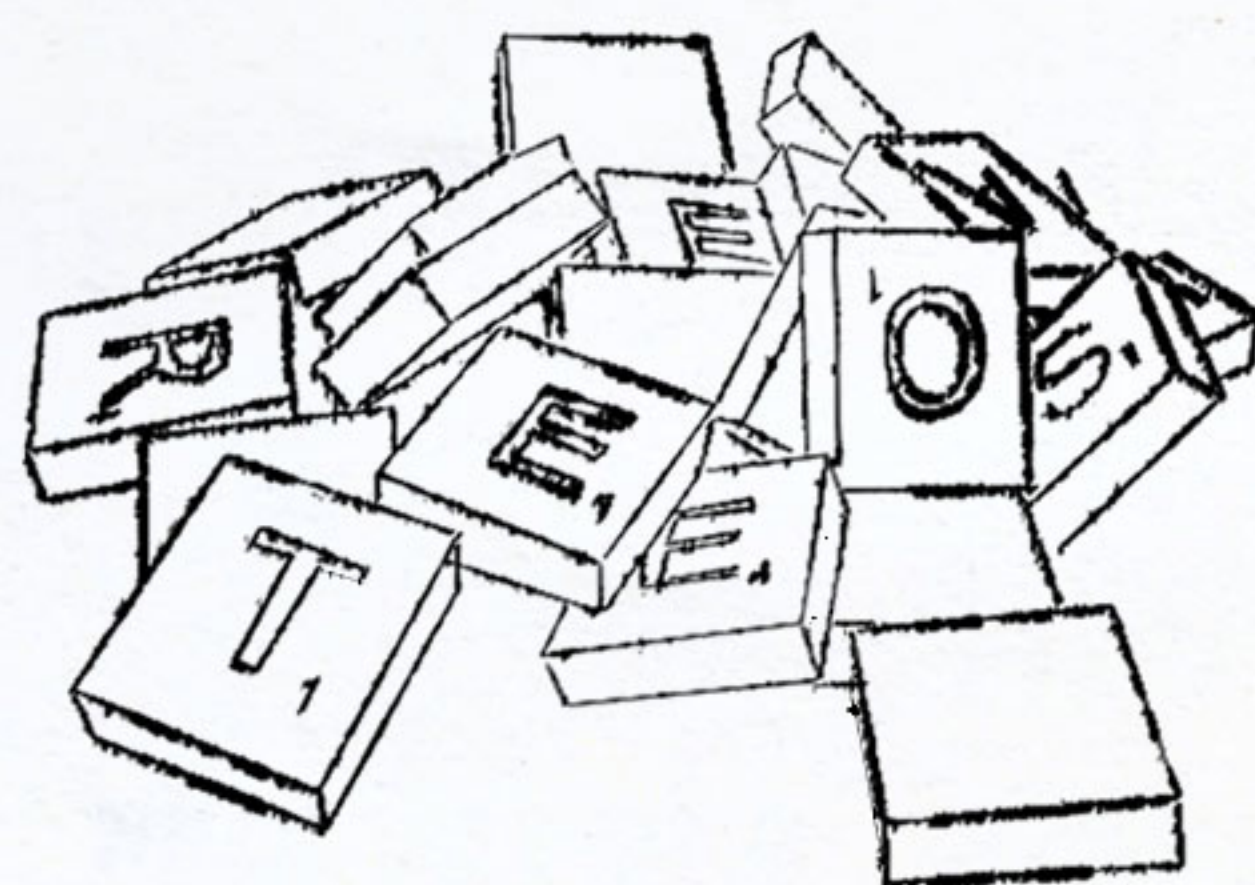
I



II



III





on the nature of the thing called poetry, chilled to pleasance and  
paired with the eyes of a baby seal

It is a tender line of love unremitting, disintegrated over grass seed  
under a headstone's shade.

*no*

It is a sharp exhale, a confused glance downward, and the ivory  
handle of a knife sprouting from your ribs.

*no*

It is what the homeless man screamed at you when you were six,  
his gibberish a clumsy handful of scrabble squares bouncing off a  
marble floor.

*no, that's not quite the whole of it*

It is all the art that is dead to you, but also the ugly inverse.

*for it is you who is dead to art, too*



THICKES

of  
WAVES

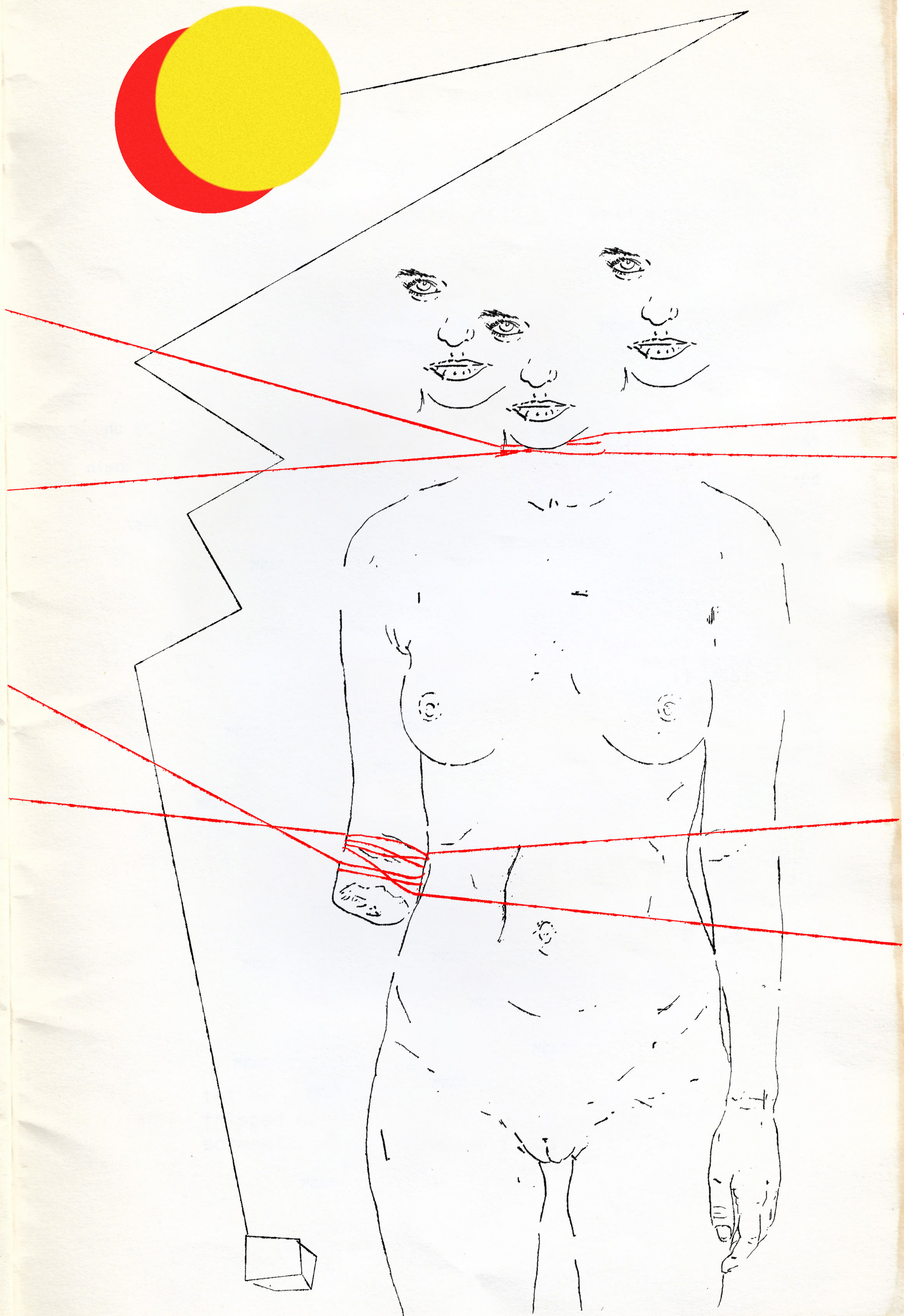




40 acres of velveteen X

And in this scene I open the door to your apartment and your bed is right there beyond the entryway and I can just barely mark the outline of your body under its sheet and I'm *MANIC*, you know, just beside myself with worry. So I'm stage left looking at you in bed and all the bus ride over here the only thing I can think about is how cold your skin is going to feel when I touch it, like when dad forced my hand on grandpa's face fifteen minutes before the wake. Think *chicken skin draped on a cinder block* and you're halfway there. And oh, before you ask, my character's excuse for taking the bus is I couldn't afford an Uber without another overdraft. And I don't call the cops for a welfare check because, well, you know. So I'm standing there in the doorway, and you know how characters in bad movies crash to their knees when they're overwhelmed? I feel that exact way and it surprises me because that kind of thing only happens to characters in bad movies and I'll worry later what that says about the quality of my screenplay but for now I'm swaying in the entryway, knees locked, and I want to crash down and curl up but I can't because I need to know if you're alive, so I shuffle on the hardwood over to you. And at this point I want all the lamps to go out but for two: one to frame me for the audience as I hobble slowly and one outlining your body in the bed. Really make it garish, though. I'm talking *autopsy bright*. And I get to the bed and reach down slow and after a couple of beats I snatch back the sheet covering your face and your body is there splayed out in a T with red velvet tumbling out the gashes in your wrists and your head screwed back in stark geometry and your empty eyes transfixed on something behind me and a reflection of my screaming stretched to tearing in their stillness and somewhere outside the shrill whistle of hot water ready for tea and I reach down and snatch a fresh strand of velvet and start yanking it out of you like a clown stringing rainbow paper out its mouth and someone takes the kettle off the heat but I carry its blisters in my throat and the velvet keeps unspooling so I keep going and it starts to gather and dominate the stage in a sloppy pile until it grows so wide that it spills through the fourth and starts to submerge the audience and then just as they panic we kill the lights and leave them there to pant for a moment or three. Then the lights flip back and the velvet's all cleaned up and on the stage they'll see that I'm still swaying in the doorway. And then you'll sit up in bed because you heard my muffled crying and you'll say my name with a raspy catch that speaks of sobbing from the night before, and when I hear your voice I don't bother pretending that this isn't a terrible movie and crash on my knees under the strange weight of your phantasm. *You aren't dead, you simply had your phone on silent* and for a disgusting moment those feel like the same thing. And then you're the one consoling me and after that we get pancakes and as I indulge in another needless pad of butter I finish burying this memory under seven golden layers of Bisquick, then wash the plot back with a pot-and-a-half of coffee black. I'm thinking of naming it "*Wednesday of the 27th Variation*." I know it needs a polish, but my foremost concern is finding somewhere to buy 40 acres of velveteen in this horrible town.







# NON NUDE APPROXISM 13



HISTORY IS A TUMBLING  
IN WHICH THE SOLE MYSTERY  
IS WHAT SPEED THE SLOPE WILL ALLOW



AND TATAMI IS

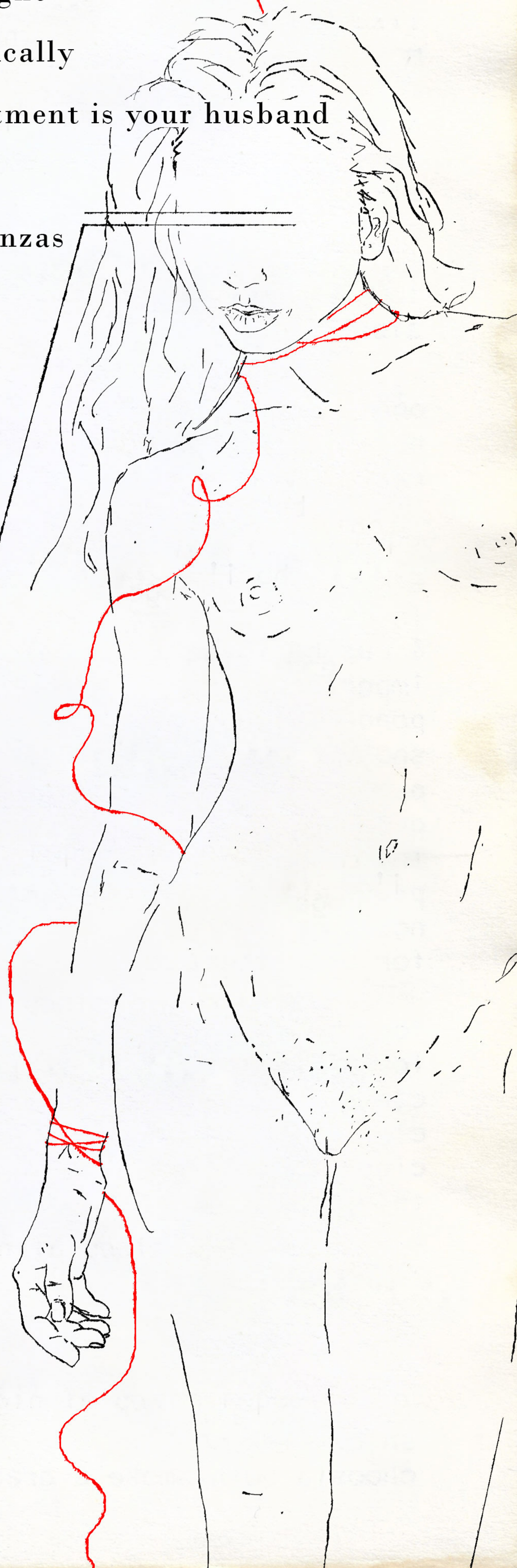
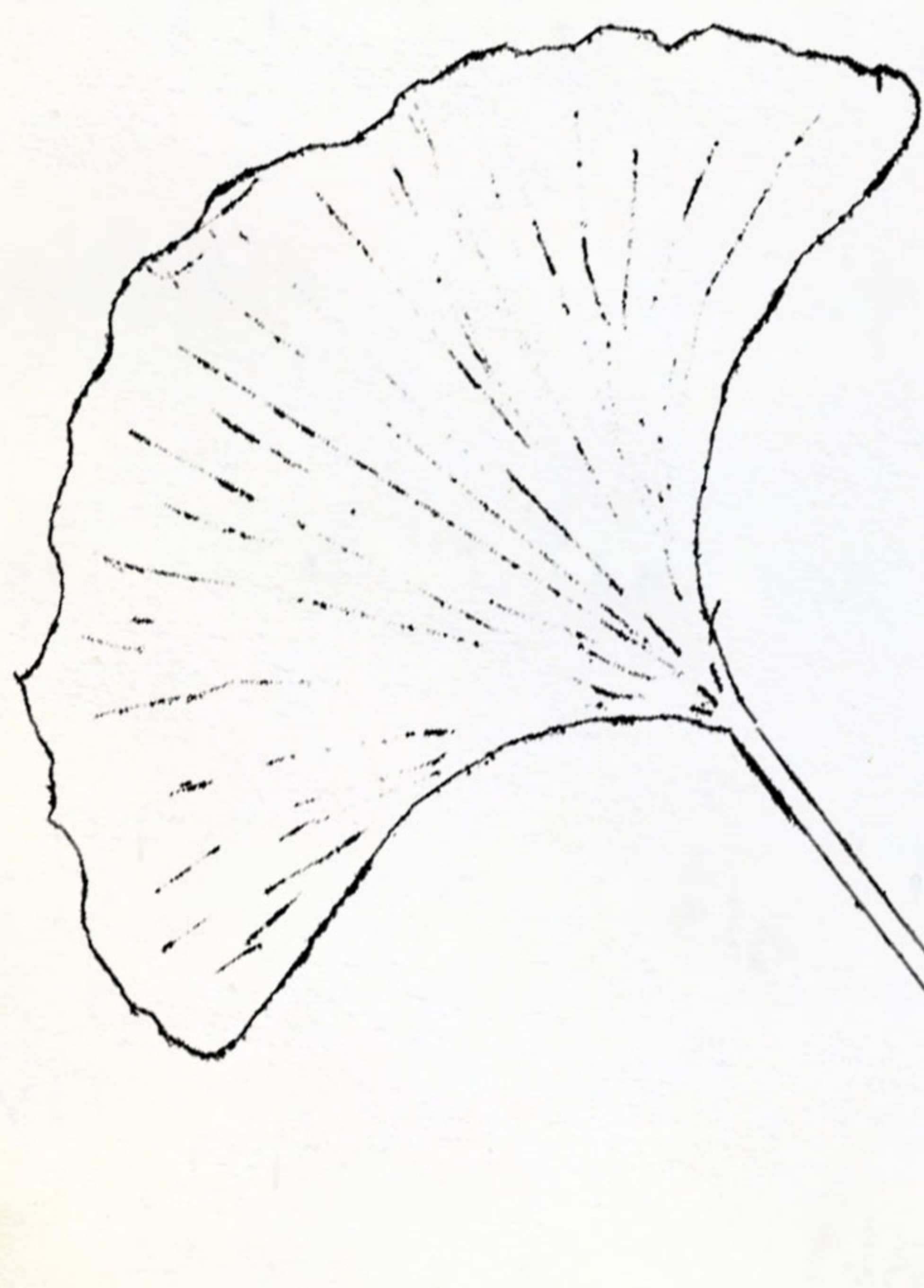
ROUGH WHEN  
YOU RUB

WRONG WAY

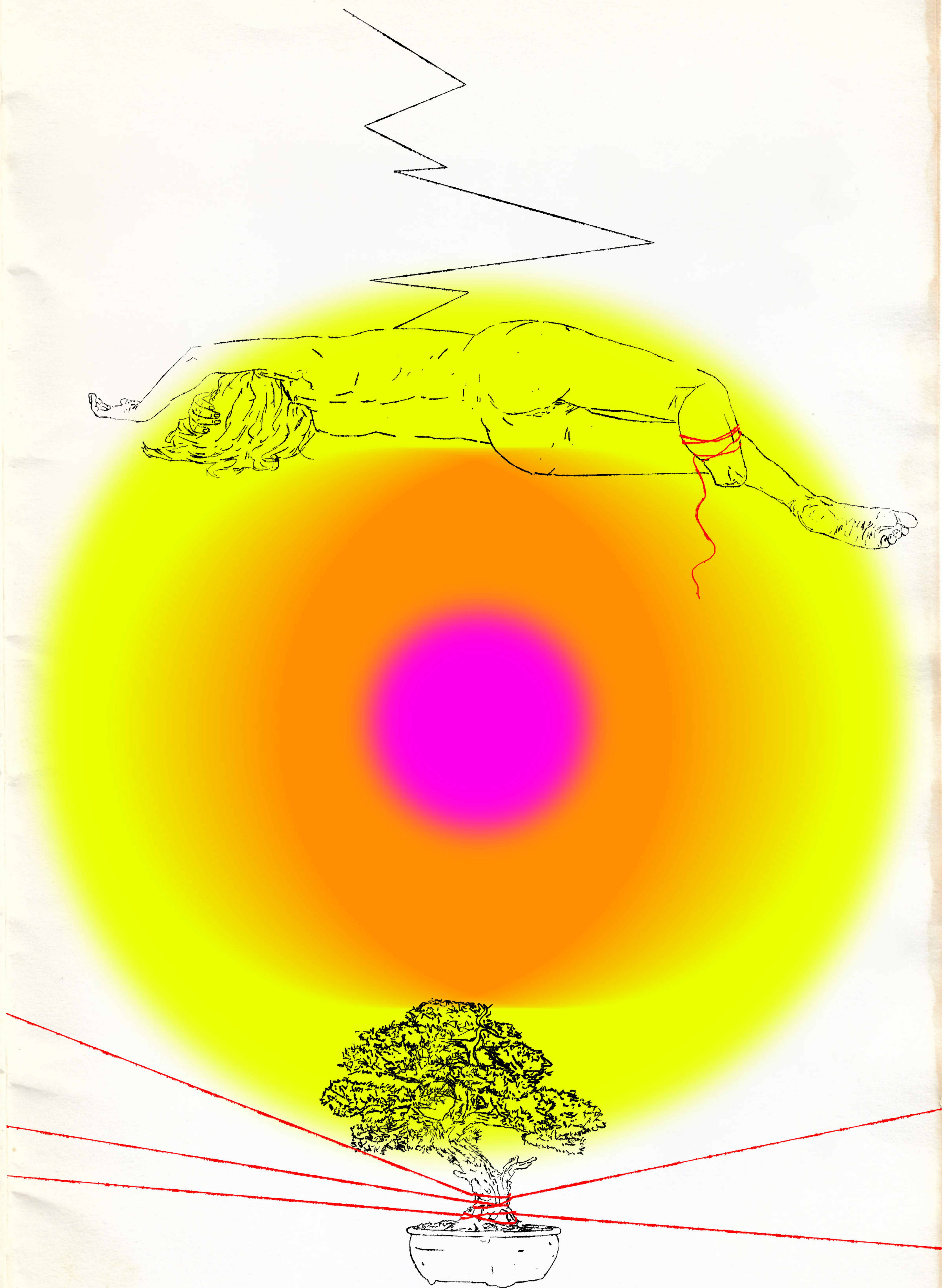


*And Tatami is Rough When You Rub the Wrong Way*

A shekere of cicada songs agitate the wells of my eyes  
with tears that smooth the edges of their sound  
and our moans marry in reckless humidity  
and we spill each other on tatami mats until it's quiet  
and your head on my thigh is a graceful weight  
and your perfect eyes do eulogize so hypnotically  
but somewhere outside this overpriced apartment is your husband  
and his specter stops me from saying  
what our desperate grappling screams in stanzas  
and repeats as many times as we can muster  
like the knowing frenzy of a child  
gulping one last lungful  
but choosing silence  
as it submerges into anecdote.



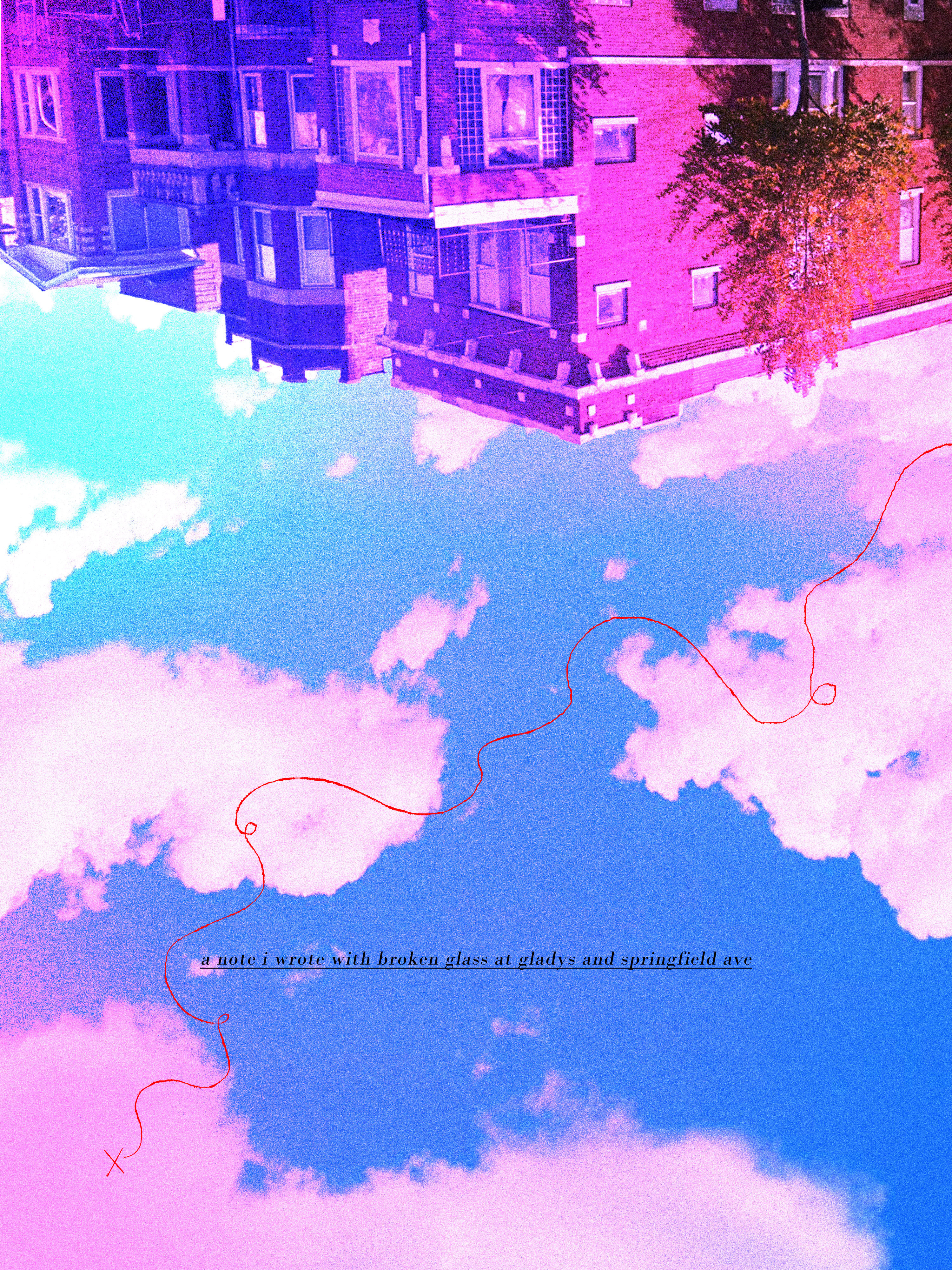






DAY LIVES  
LIKE BRITISH  
HUMOR, A MYSTERY  
EVEN TO ITS MOST  
FREQUENT PRACTITIONERS





*a note i wrote with broken glass at gladys and springfield ave*



a note i wrote with broken glass at gladys and springfield ave

a belch  
of misplaced  
air or  
a genealogy's  
extinction are  
a millimeter's  
distinction on  
the trail  
a bullet  
b  
l  
a  
z  
e  
s  
X



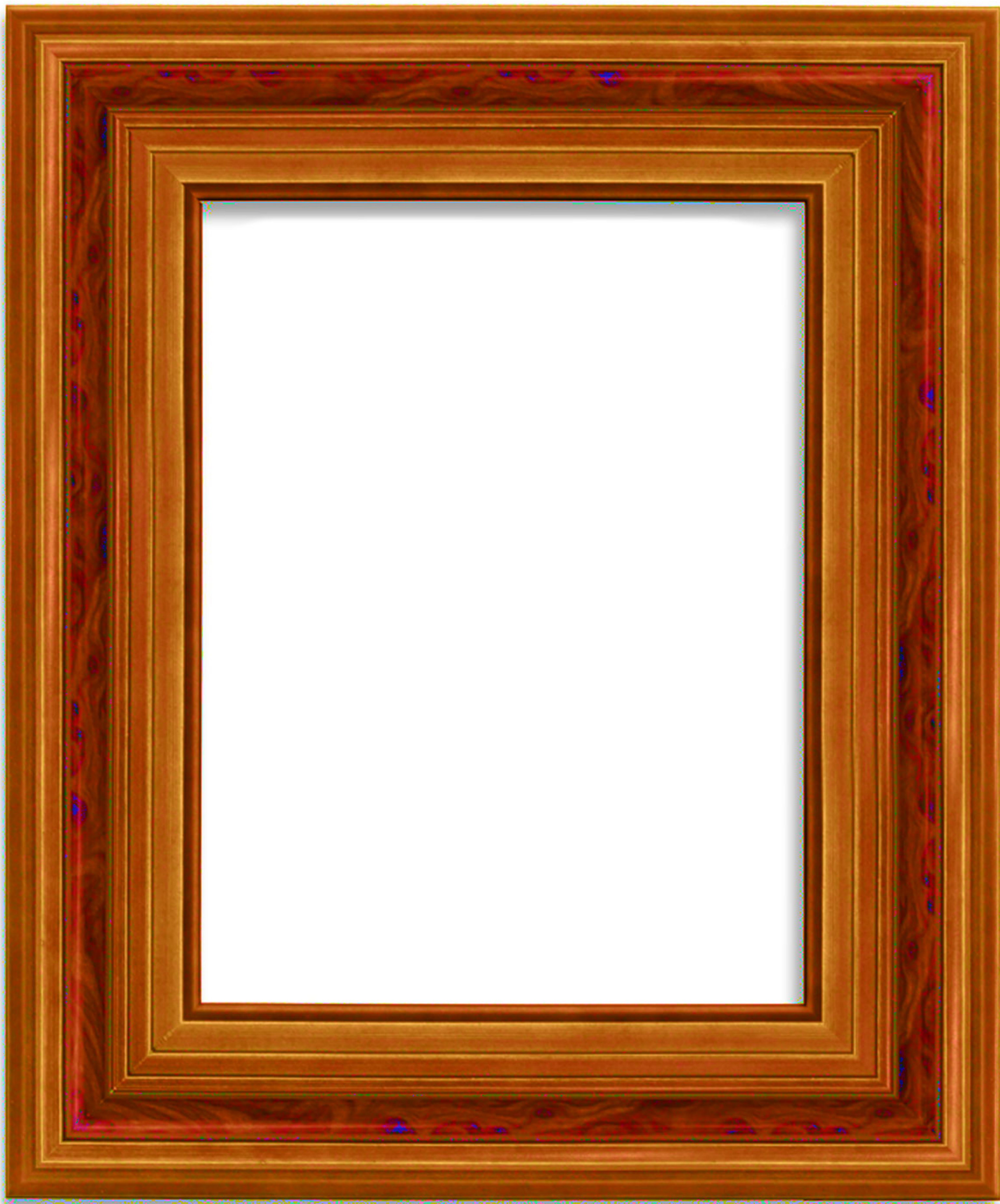
THERE ARE NO  
GREAT MEN  
ONLY GREAT  
STORIES



THE MAN WHO RUSHES THROUGH THE GALLERY  
SEES LESS THAN THE MAN WHO NEVER WENT

THE CHAMPAGNE'S ELECTRIC  
American, b. 1983

*Meek's Inheritance, 2020*  
folly wrapped in fantasy, framed



NON NOVE  
APHORISM #fifteen



I didnt feel like bleeding  
 for this graphic so instead  
 I simply wrote

You have been found monetarily ineligible on your most recent regular unemployment insurance claim and/or the Extended Benefits or Emergency Unemployment Compensation program you were recently paid on is no longer available in Illinois.  
 For additional information about this notice and your right to appeal, please contact the Agency at the number listed above.

WEEKS PAID

Week Ending	Program	Benefit Explanation	WBA(\$)	Dependency Allowance(\$)	Total Deducts(\$)	Recoupment Amount(\$)	FPUC Amount(\$)	Child Support(\$)	Net Benefits(\$)
04/11/2020	UI	No WBA	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
04/18/2020	UI	No WBA	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
UI = Regular Unemployment									
PEUC = Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation									
TRA = Trade Readjustment Allowance									
Your Benefit Year Ending date is 04/04/2021.									
Your Maximum Benefit Amount Balance is \$0.00 and your Benefit Year Ending date is 04/04/2021.									
Your Overpayment Balance is \$0.00.									
Your Penalty Weeks Balance is 0. This balance expires on N/A.									
You have exhausted your Regular Unemployment Insurance Benefits.									
Important Information:									
Save this information and contact the Agency at the phone number listed above if you have any questions about your									

ON A rejection  
 Notice for UNEMPLOYMENT  
 INSURANCE AND MOVED ON WITH  
 MY SO-CALLED Life but NOT  
 IN A CLAIre DANes KIND OF WAY\*

\*because claire danes is actually successful

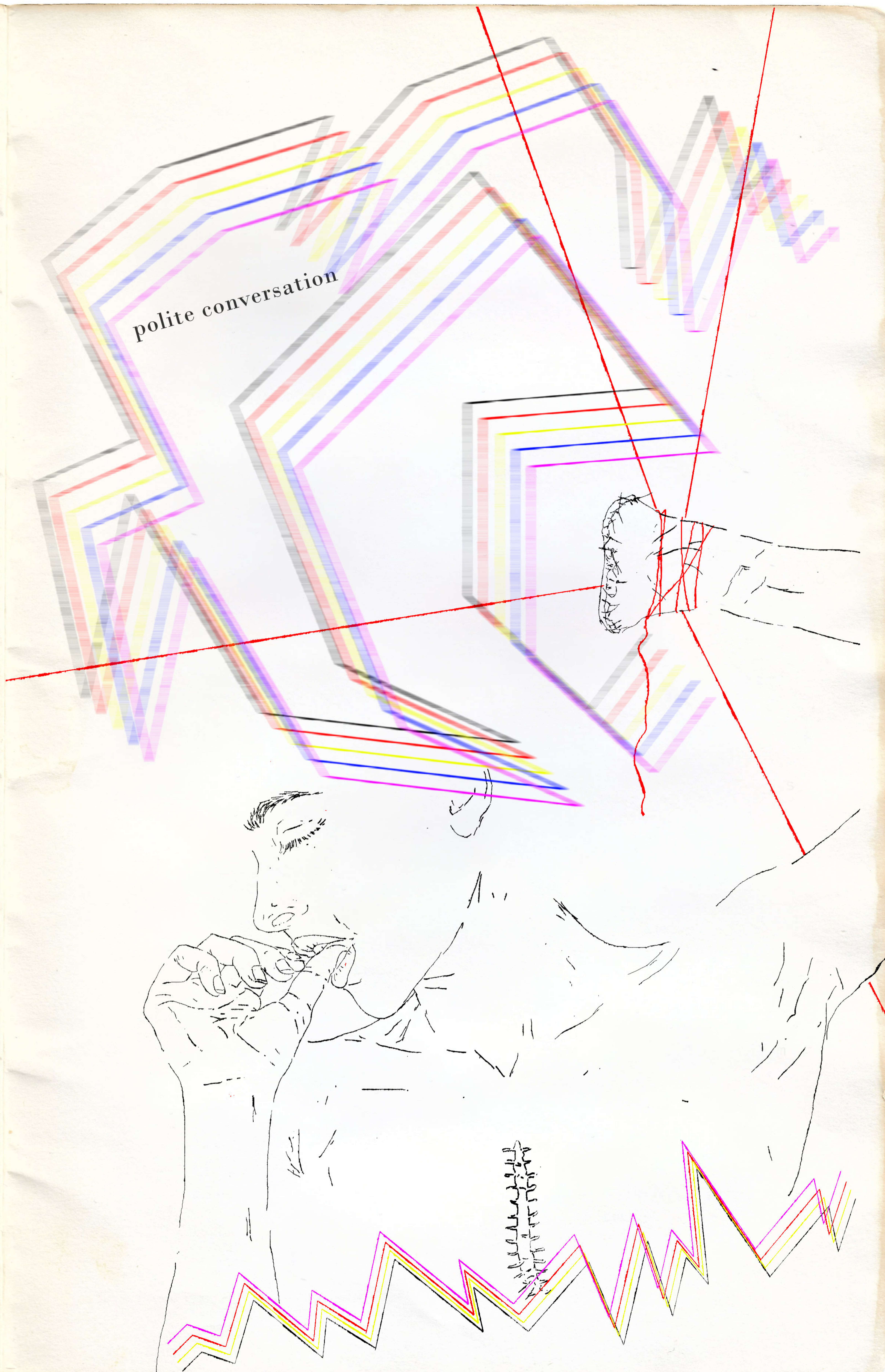


a reliquary of kleenex

On a legal pad in blue ink it said "The Last Will and Testament" of you and I considered correcting your desperate spelling but you were on pills and on the phone with your uncle when you wrote it so I flick to page three and see you've left me an apartment I can't afford and your sister the macbook pro so I stop reading and crack the glass you keep behind your bed for narrative purposes as outside your apartment crept the weather I can't remember from that one time you were locked to a hospital bed on the South Side and my phone is locked in the present tense with your aunt two-times-removed shooting me questions I can't dodge and your uncle asks in all caps if the knife is still there so I look and it isn't but there are tissues near the left ankle of the couch in whose angles I see the purple peek of fresh blood dimpled up in the crux of its own confusion but I don't tell your uncle that part because I haven't written it yet and I stuff the tissues in my pocket and bike in the cold rain I can only remember now that I'm in it and as I near the hospital I crash and skelter past a gallery of neutral tones desperate to find the room restraining you and when I do I bring a bouquet of shouting behind me but I don't care about all that so I rip the beige restraints at all four corners and see how grey your face and you smile somehow and albatross your hands behind my neck and the bandages rub rough on my skin but it's your roughness and someone near is shrieking like a car horn but I will not stop because you feel as light as the promise that you wouldn't do this again and as I carry you past the vending machines I see one of them is selling the Yankees hat I lost in 1993 and when I ask if you have any change the bike seat bites my ass through a pothole disguised as a lake and the jolt wakes the ache I curate in the dreidels of my spine that does not allow for fantasy and it moans that I'm five miles more beyond the beginning of a sentence that started with a sob I made on the phone with your father this morning and I feel sick about how they're stories before we're even done living them but the cold rain is here and that helps and the concrete is here and that helps and with street lights my only audience I end it aloud across from a hot dog stand that closes six months from yesterday:

it L i e S b e h i N d U s







WHEN THE VEHICLE OF HISTORY  
BEGINS TO HYDROPLANE  
IT HAS A WAY OF ALWAYS  
VEERING STRANGELY TO THE RIGHT




NON NVD  
Aptorism  
#SIXTEEN



what every politician learns on the second day of orientation  
two hours subsequent to the Goldman Sachs initiation

BLOOD MISTS  
TO TRANSPARENCY  
TWELVE STEPS REMOVED  
FROM THE TIKTOK  
KILL





as if to undo the fusion of the fontanelle

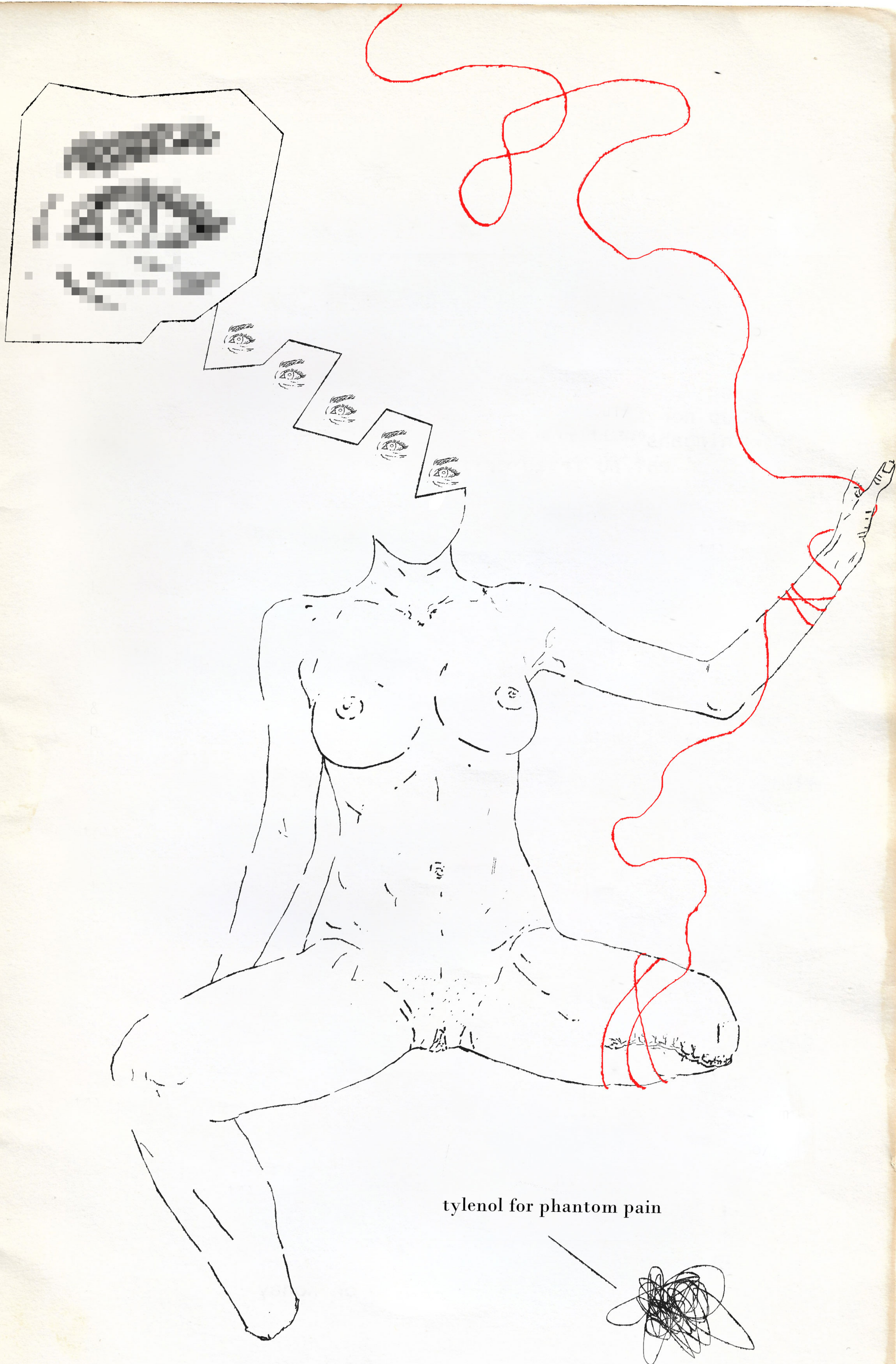
the space heater gave birth on the radiator so the boy gathered up the slop of the placenta and tossed it out the window into the back alley and when he went outside to better see the art of it there was a man in the alleyway who glared as he walked by and his look spoke hatreds that were undeserved but were given anyway and the boy thought of walking up to the man and teeping him hard on his left knee so that it bent back in a wet snap and once the man collapsed in curses he would mount the pile of him and slice at the scalp and forearms with the box cutter he kept in his back pocket until the skin atop the man's head hung like strips of stubbled pasta and then he would look up and find the window with the umbilical cord still draped over the sill and as it slithered wet against the brick he would beat the man with wild hooks around the orbit and the temple until the pleading drowned in gurgles and then he would take the razor to him and afterwards cure the ears under the window by a hoop of umbilica so they would not reek when he nestled them in a square of blue satin to keep under his bed for times when he needed to reflect on his doings here and recall that something beautiful was still to be had for the butchers





My mind Swirls in  
Circles of violent  
Exposition, searching for  
A face To mutilate  
and A Bourbon to  
Ameliorate but the  
burn That clings the  
guilters of my Throat  
Splashes with a N  
Honesty my pen can  
Only limitate

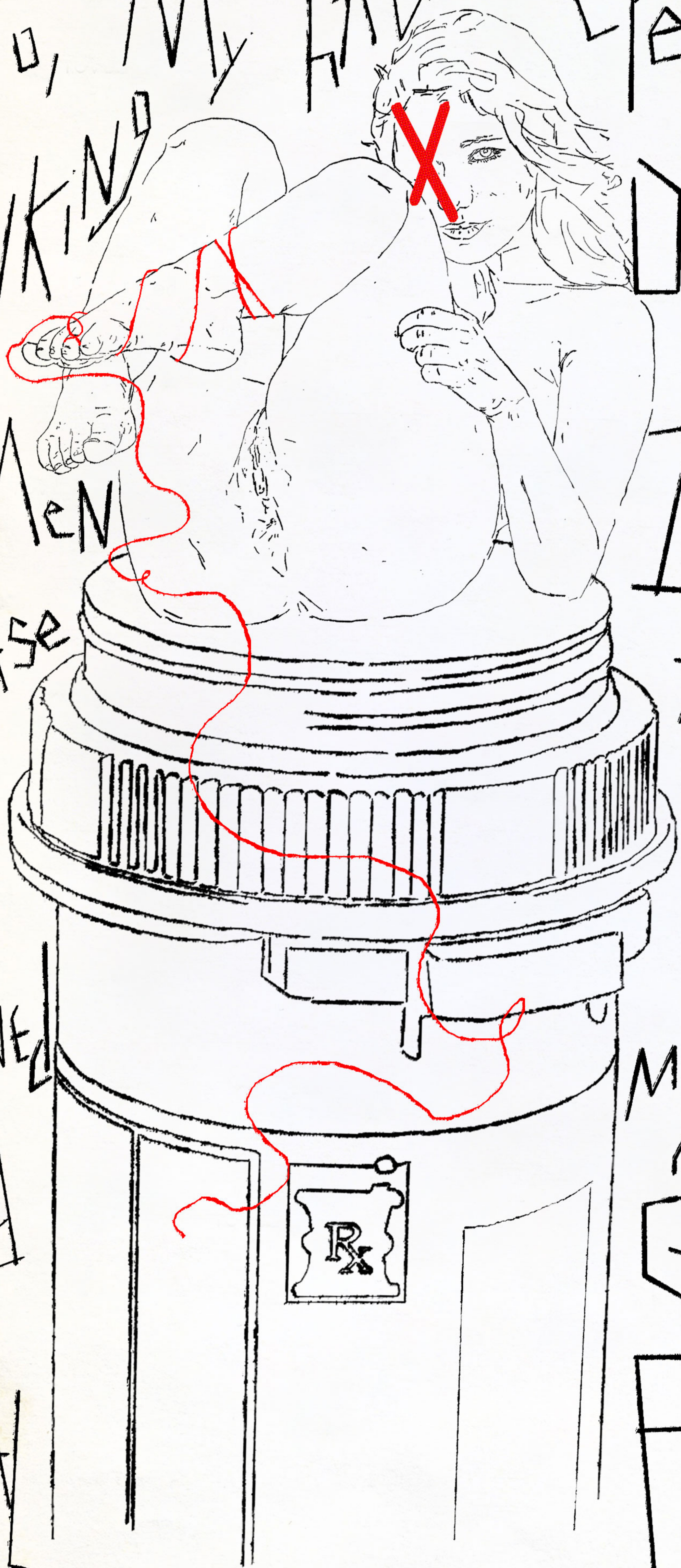




tylenol for phantom pain



ALL of the things I am im-  
potent  
to, My HALF-effect  
Masturbations,  
THINKING ONLY of the  
WOMEN I failed to  
PLEASE AND NOTHING  
of those that  
MOANED my NAME  
And God's with  
EQUA FEALTY





I AM HUMBLE IN  
THE MIDST OF  
RIGHTEOUS  
BEAUTY  
AND SO AM  
NATURAL  
ON MY KNEES  
BEFORE YOU

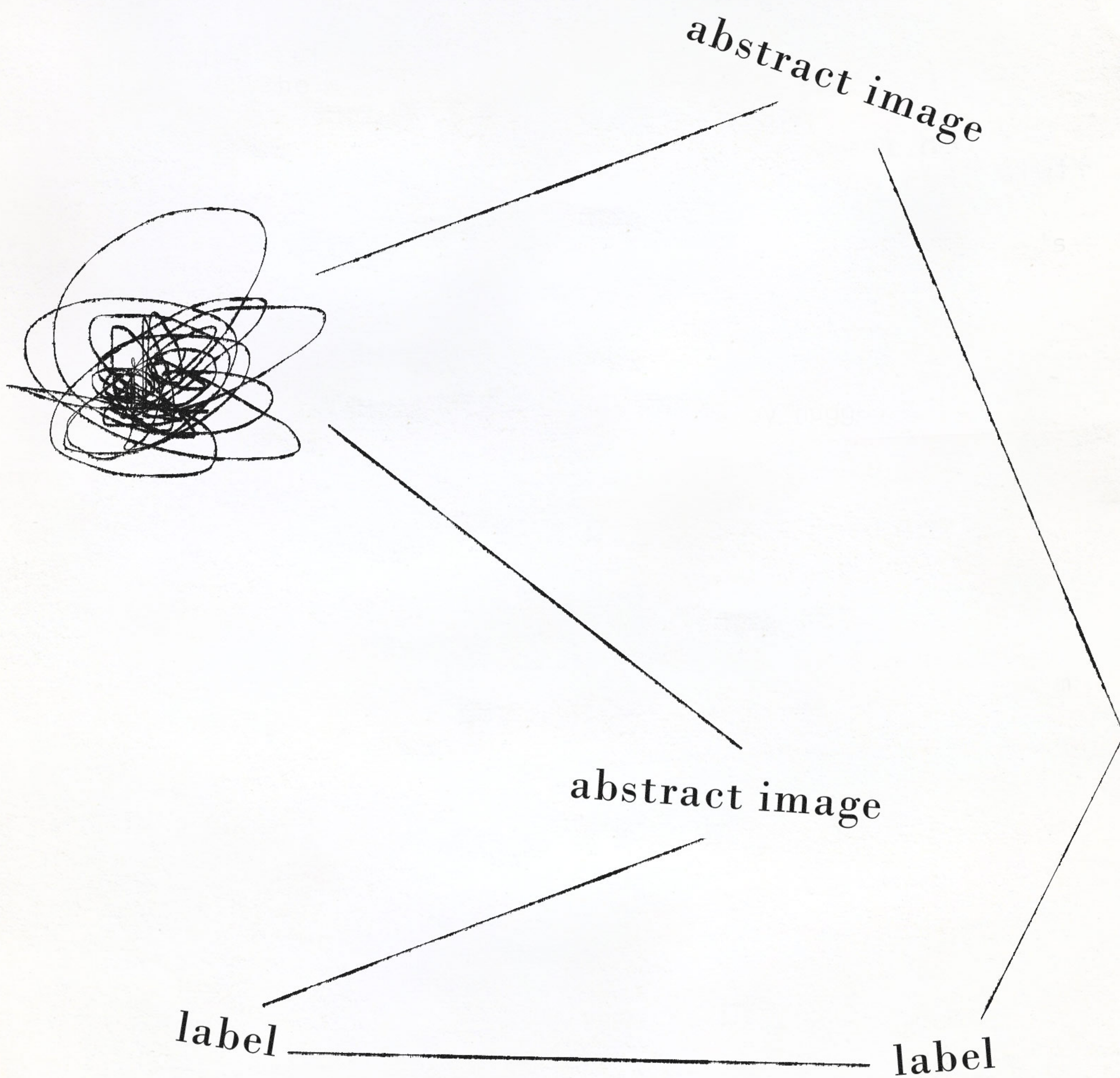


I NIBBLED TH<sub>M</sub>ING  
COOPL<sub>E</sub>Ts ALONG YOUR  
NECK AND LAVISHED  
PU<sub>P</sub>LE ELQALENCE  
ON ALL THE SOFTEST  
SPOTS



think a thought you whorey slut

should yet another vapid man  
label me a delusional poet,  
my sole objection will only be  
the arrogant ignorance of his  
repeated redundancy







THE TROUBLE IS NOT WITH WORDS  
BUT WITH ME THEIR FLIMSY INSTRUMENT





IN THE ORGY OF POSTMODERNITY, SELF-WORTH IS  
MEASURED IN IMPRESSIONS-PER-INCH  
AND SHRIVELS WITH ACCUMULATED INFLATION



*if there were any anchor for sacred beauty  
it were tethered in the transience of you*





Saint  
Indignation



st. indignantious

*The curtains part and reveal the interior of a cafeteria-style diner at midmorning. A man and a woman sit center stage at a small table. The man is holding a coffee mug while the woman pokes at a plate of scrambled eggs. In the background is the entrance to the restaurant, framed by large windows revealing the bustle of a city street at the onset of winter.*

MAN

What would you have named it?

*[The woman looks up from her food]*

MAN

After your father?

WOMAN *[In an aggressive whisper]*

Do not do this to me here, do not use this so you can thrive off the spectacle. So you can write about it.

MAN

I don't *thrive off the spectacle*. Jesus, you and your need to, to melo...dramatize-

WOMAN

You just finished asking me what I would have named it.

MAN

Yes.

WOMAN

Yes.

*[The man takes a sip of coffee, turns his gaze towards the kitchen]*

MAN

I think someone's putting pennies in the coffee machine.

*[The woman returns her focus to the plate in front of her. She responds without looking up]*

WOMAN

Add more cream.



*[The man grabs a sugar container and dispenses a long stream of granules into his mug. He speaks while stirring]*

MAN

I don't remember the winters being this long before. It's cold half the year.  
*[Beat]* And I can write about whatever I want to write about.

*[The woman looks up and speaks in an aggressive but measured tone]*

WOMAN

*I don't remember the winters being this long, stop. Before is pointless. It's been established as past-tense by the verb. You can't remember something that hasn't happened yet. [She gestures toward the entrance] It's like having a conversation about the weather outside but starting every sentence with now. We know already. Half the shit you say could go unsaid.*

*[He goes to speak but stops. There is a long, deliberate silence. He stares at her as she waits for his response. It does not come. Her frustration grows for 10 seconds or so before he finally raises his eyebrows and nods]*

WOMAN

Impressive.

MAN

I'm withdrawing. *[He pushes his chair back from the table]*

WOMAN

You're withdrawing from breakfast.

MAN

From the game.

WOMAN

The game.

*[The man gestures with his finger back and forth between the two of them]*

MAN

You're smart. You're smarter than me. You're faultless. You're independent.



WOMAN

Lord.

MAN

You're pristine. Clean.

WOMAN

Stop.

MAN

You're, I don't know, resplendence-

WOMAN

Resplendent.

MAN

You're resplendent. Congratulations on your *resplendence*. I'm leaving.  
Now.

*[The man stands up and walks toward the entrance but she grabs his forearm  
as he passes]*

WOMAN

I didn't qualify.

MAN

How could you not qualify?

WOMAN

I make too much. And I can't cover it with what I have.

*[The man returns to his chair and sits]*

MAN

How much is it?

WOMAN

A lot.

MAN

Don't they just have to, to let the air in or something like that?

WOMAN

*Let the air in?*



MAN

I read about it in high school. Some bullshit-

WOMAN

No, they don't let the air in. [*Beat*] We're early so they do it with a pill.

MAN

So how much is the pill.

WOMAN

And an ultrasound. Blood work, medications, follow-ups. More if there are complications. It's expensive.

MAN

This is why I told you to get on Medicare.

WOMAN

I make too much for Medicare.

MAN

Then why can't you-

WOMAN

[*Forcefully*] We. And I don't have enough. I told you. This, the car, loans, rent, I can't get enough together. And I'm not going to ask my-

MAN

No no no of course not.

WOMAN

And the indignity of a payment plan.

MAN

There's no indignity in it.

WOMAN

I decide that.

MAN

There's no indignity. What about all the others who do a plan?

WOMAN

I'm not them.

MAN

[*To himself*] Indignity. Indig...Indig...nations? Sounds like a saint. Patron saint of...[*he scans the restaurant*]...dishwasher doors. [*The man reaches for the reporter's notebook hanging out the back pocket of his jeans. He notices her watching and stops halfway*] How much do you need.



WOMAN

1,000.

MAN

Jesus.

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

1,000.

WOMAN

Yes. [*Beat*] Can you get 1,000?

MAN

Well I have to, don't I.

WOMAN

Yes.

[*Silence*]

Do you have it now?

MAN

No. I can get it. A few days.

WOMAN

A few days.

MAN

Yes, I promise, a few days. There's a job I haven't invoiced. [*He takes a sip of coffee and looks to the kitchen*]

WOMAN

I don't want to hear about the pennies.

[*He looks down at the coffee mug and takes another modest sip*]

MAN

You don't want to be a mother?

WOMAN

I do.

MAN

Then-



WOMAN

I don't want you. [*She turns her head to the entrance and watches the street. Foot and vehicle traffic pass without slowing. A woman in her 50s or 60s is now standing by the front entrance asking passers-by for change. She has a thin coat and is not wearing gloves*] I don't want to see you when I look at it.

MAN

*It.*

[*She turns abruptly to face him*]

WOMAN

Yes, it. *It.*

MAN

I don't know how you can call it that.

[*She raises her eyebrows at him*]

You know what I meant. [*Beat*] Am I that bad?

WOMAN

You are bad enough.

MAN

Maybe I could change- [*He pauses. After a moment he takes a sip and looks once more in the direction of the kitchen. The sound of a line cook walking around with a pocketful of coins can be heard offstage*] I don't know why I said that. Like I'm reading from a script. That's what my father would have said.

WOMAN

I wouldn't know.

MAN

It's because I don't like him.

WOMAN

I know.

MAN

I told you how he treated us when we were young.

WOMAN

I know.

MAN

It's not because I was, ashamed or anything.

WOMAN

I know. I'm sorry, I know. I'm angry. I'm just angry.



MAN

At me?

WOMAN

You're in there somewhere. But there's more. It's...it's amorphous.

MAN

*Amorphous.* [Beat] I'm sorry it's amorphous.

WOMAN

Me too.

MAN

They don't teach you about these things in public school. Long division loses its pragmatism...its pragmatic value at a certain point.

WOMAN

Yes, I suppose improper fractions won't be pulling any weight during the abortion.

MAN

[*He hushes her discreetly*] Jesus, you're not supposed to say it.

WOMAN

Why not. That's what it is.

MAN

There's no art in just saying it like that.

WOMAN

What do you think that means?

MAN

That there's no art in saying it. That's all.

WOMAN

Look around. There's no art in anything.

[*A few beats pass. The man takes a few more sips, the woman pokes at her food*]

MAN

What you just said. Even when you're saying it, even then. You could scream it, and it's still not being said.

[*She looks at him for a moment and then returns her attention to the scrambled eggs. Thirty seconds of silence pass between the two of them. She never eats*]



MAN

That woman out front asking for change. [*He gestures at the entrance*] I bought her two pairs of gloves last fall. She had her hands tucked under her arms just like that. Looked pitiful when I first saw it. On my way out once I asked her if she needed gloves and she said yes. So I biked to Target, must have been early in October because there weren't any gloves on the floor yet so I went over to Walgreens and found a few pair, gave them to her. Felt nice to do it, one little good thing for someone who needed it. Whenever I passed by after I checked to see if she was wearing them and she never was. She was still hugging herself barehanded, shivering and asking for change. Now I just get her a cup of coffee on my way out. [*He turns to the audience. A fresh batch of coffee slurps and spills noisily into a pot from somewhere in the darkness*] I feel like I could have been a father if you had named it. Only if you had named it.

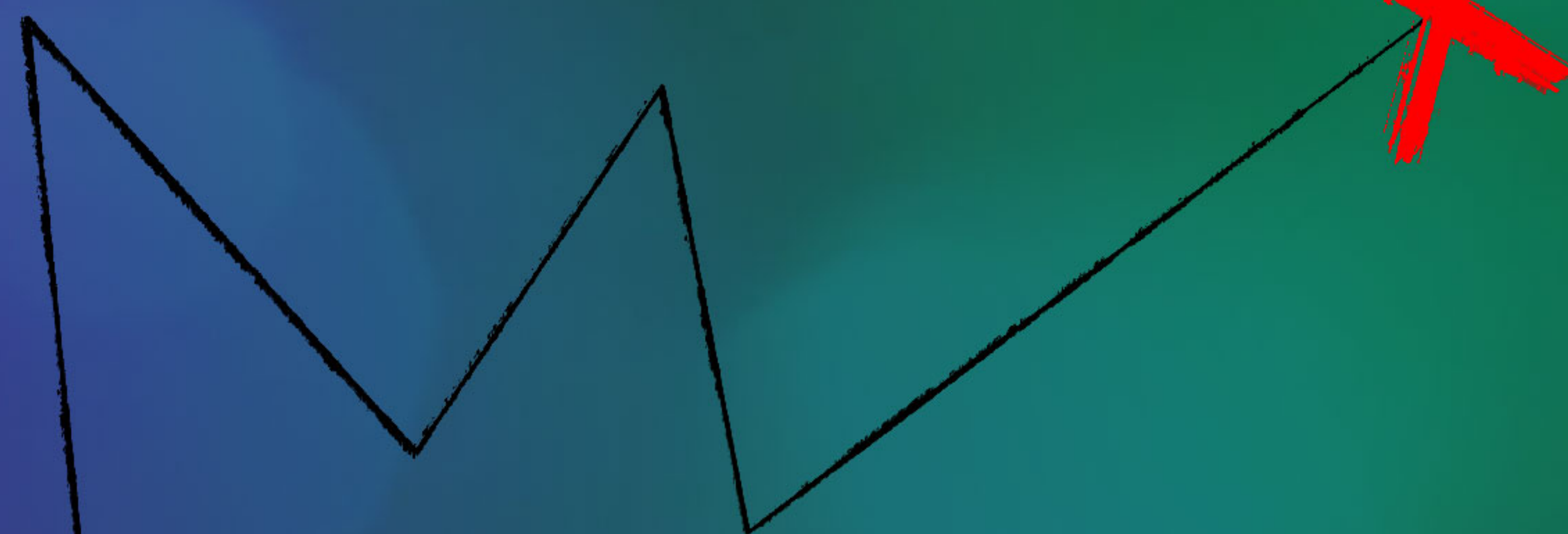
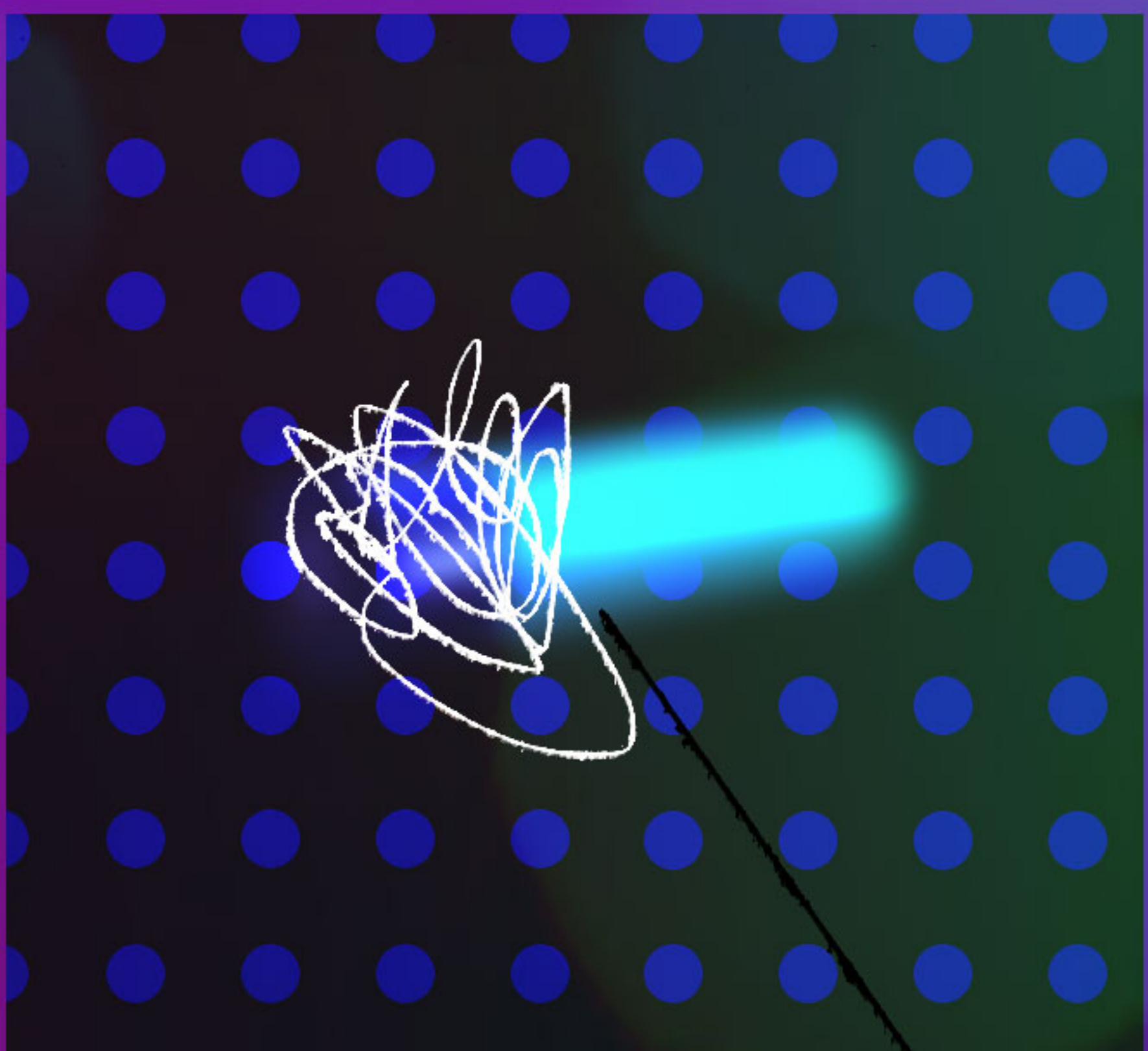
[*They sit in silence. He sips his coffee. She begins eating her breakfast in tepid bites. He looks at her from across the table as she eats. After a moment he takes out his notebook and begins writing. The only clear voice is coming from the beggar outside. She is asking hurried passers-by for spare change and saying "God bless you" as they go. The curtain, ragged and littered with patches, closes.*]

END



POETRY DOES NOT  
HOLD HANDS AND  
ASK YOUR FATHER  
PERMISSION TO  
F U C K  
IT EDGES TO THE  
LIP OF EPIPHANY  
A N D  
S W A L L O W S  
NIRVANA WHOLE



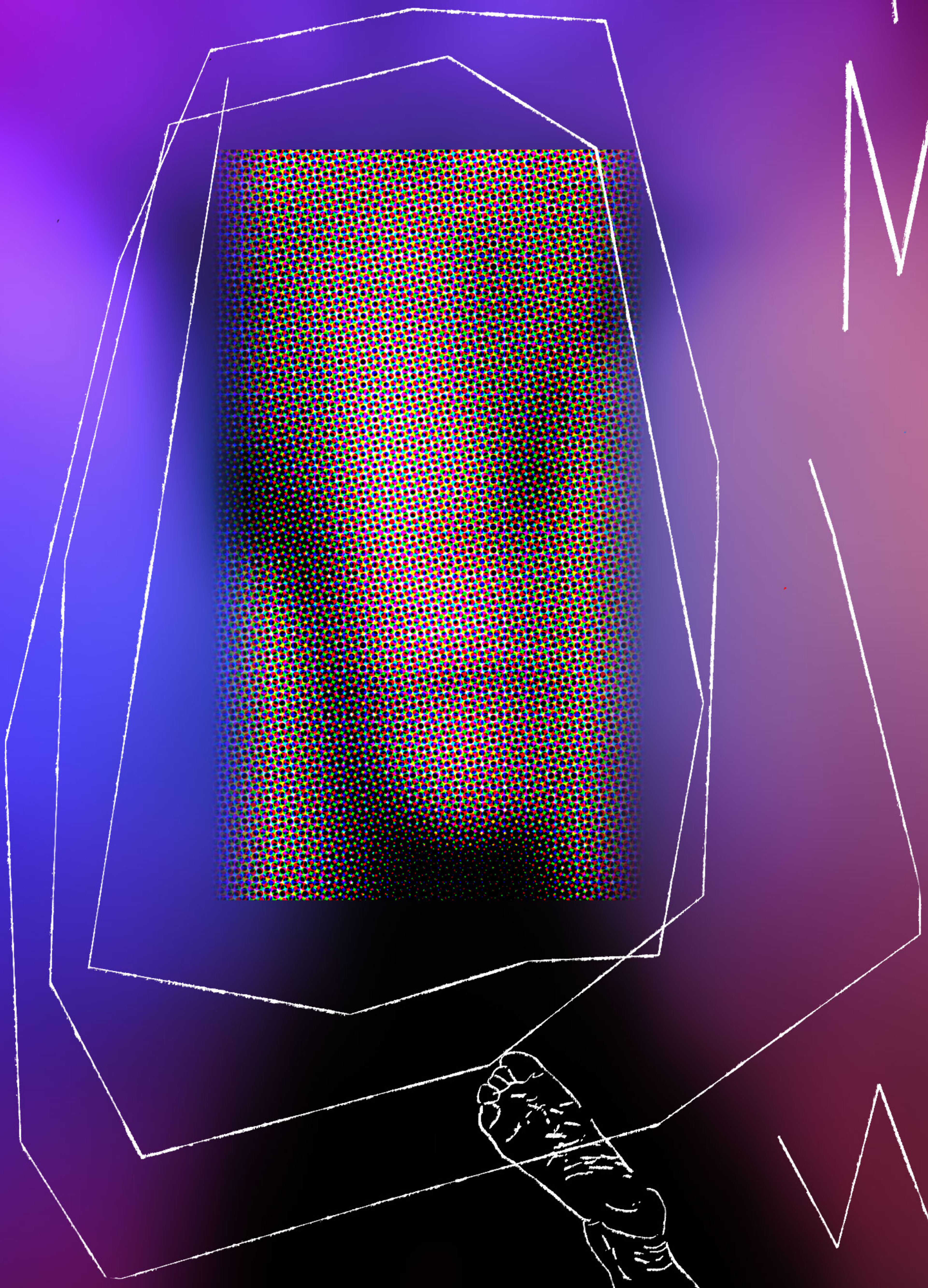


SERENITY'S  
LIVES  
S  
H  
IN  
E  
POTENTIAL  
SHOTGUN  
L  
L  
S

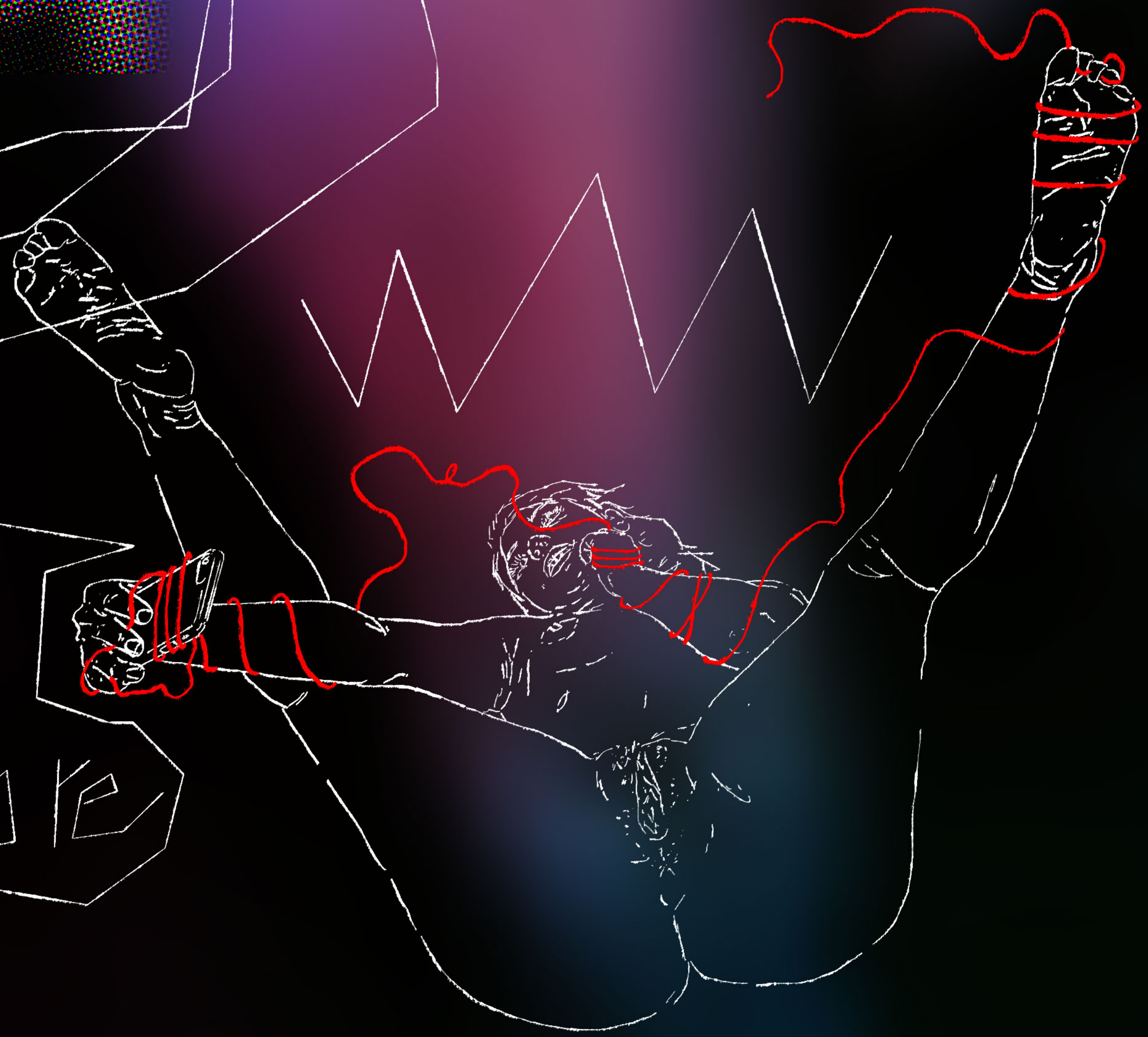


THINK OF IT MY SWEET  
BUT MORE DECAY FOR THE WORMS TO EAT

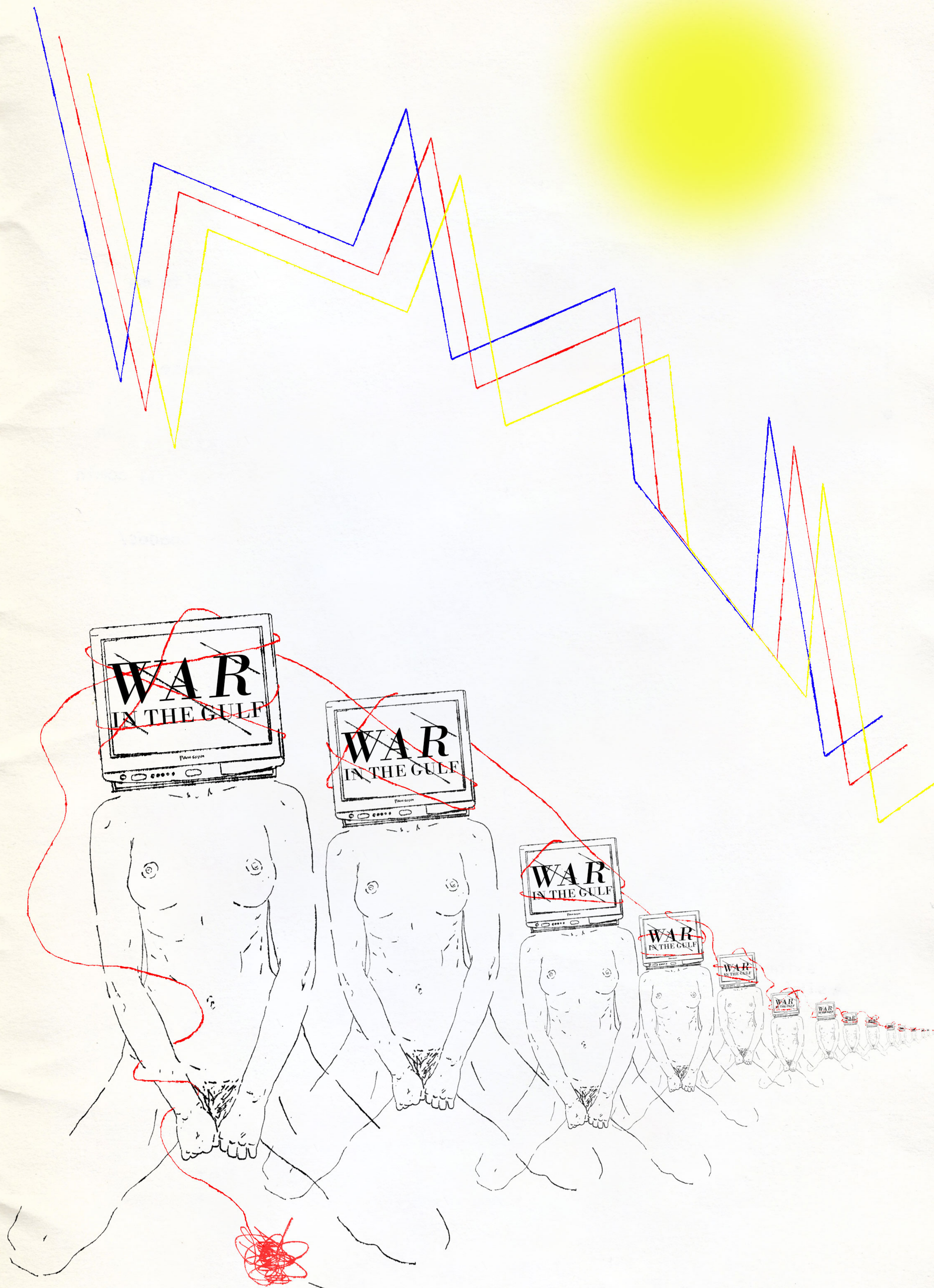
THE KICK OF THE  
MINDLESSNESS



THE LOVELESS  
NOSTALGIA WHORE







pathology of modernity or palsied scribble



a meticulous audit of delusion, from meta to mutual

a desert field.  
endless rows in sepia tones.  
towers of facsimile papers  
haunted overhead by birds of low resolution  
circling in orbits of gaussian distribution.  
the fowl startle in jagged lines  
when the towers tip and tumble  
in a clumsy intercourse  
of postmodern pornographies.  
and the crash that emits  
from the orgy of their collision  
sounds strangely like the discourse that derives  
from echoes eating their antecedents,  
mistaking meconium for opus



4

tasted of

delicious

datastrophes

beginning to be

endured



my remarks upon your recent graduation, compiled  
under duress and scribbled on a handful of napkins  
at the international house of pancakes

to you, the graduating class of 2037, i say: congratulations on your profound accomplishment. kindergarten is a trying time. as you can rightly attest, its pressures can twist the soul into strange, play-doh shapes. its terrors can leave a sticky residue, much like that of saliva dried around the edges of your favorite toy.

even now, looking out, i see you squirming in your plastic chairs, agitated by that nameless fervor, the one that commands you wordlessly to go out and conquer all those nap times yet to come. oh the glory of your youth. oh the stench of life that reeks from your soiled overalls.

well, squirm no more. go out and make it so, young titans. let not the poopy pants of days yet lived make you timid. let not the mean doody heads of years to come bow you under their loathsome weight.

already though i am overlong in my remarks, having wasted too many moments of your innocent attention. plus that kid in the third row just threw up what looks to be about a liter of chocolate milk, and i know how to read a room.

so i leave you with this: i was challenged by your 19-year-old dean to craft a simple conceit, a comparison clear enough to convey the character of the world you now enter, the world you will hopefully wring with your tiny, mud-caked hands.

to you, the graduating class of 2037, my last gift: a metaphor. an elegant coupling, much like that of peanut-flavored corn syrup and grape-flavored corn syrup, a commingling of nouns that speaks of my own verbal mastery as it simultaneously unmask the true nature of this place. heed me children, for this illusory world is little more than an

*ant farm etch-a-sketch.*

you're welcome.

i will be selling copies of my poetry over by that toyota camry when this is over. yes, the one without the bumper. no, the grey one. the *other* grey one. and yes, before you ask, i still give discounts to single mothers. oh, and if you want something signed, bring your own crayon. thank you for your time and attention, and by all that is holy how old was that fucking milk.



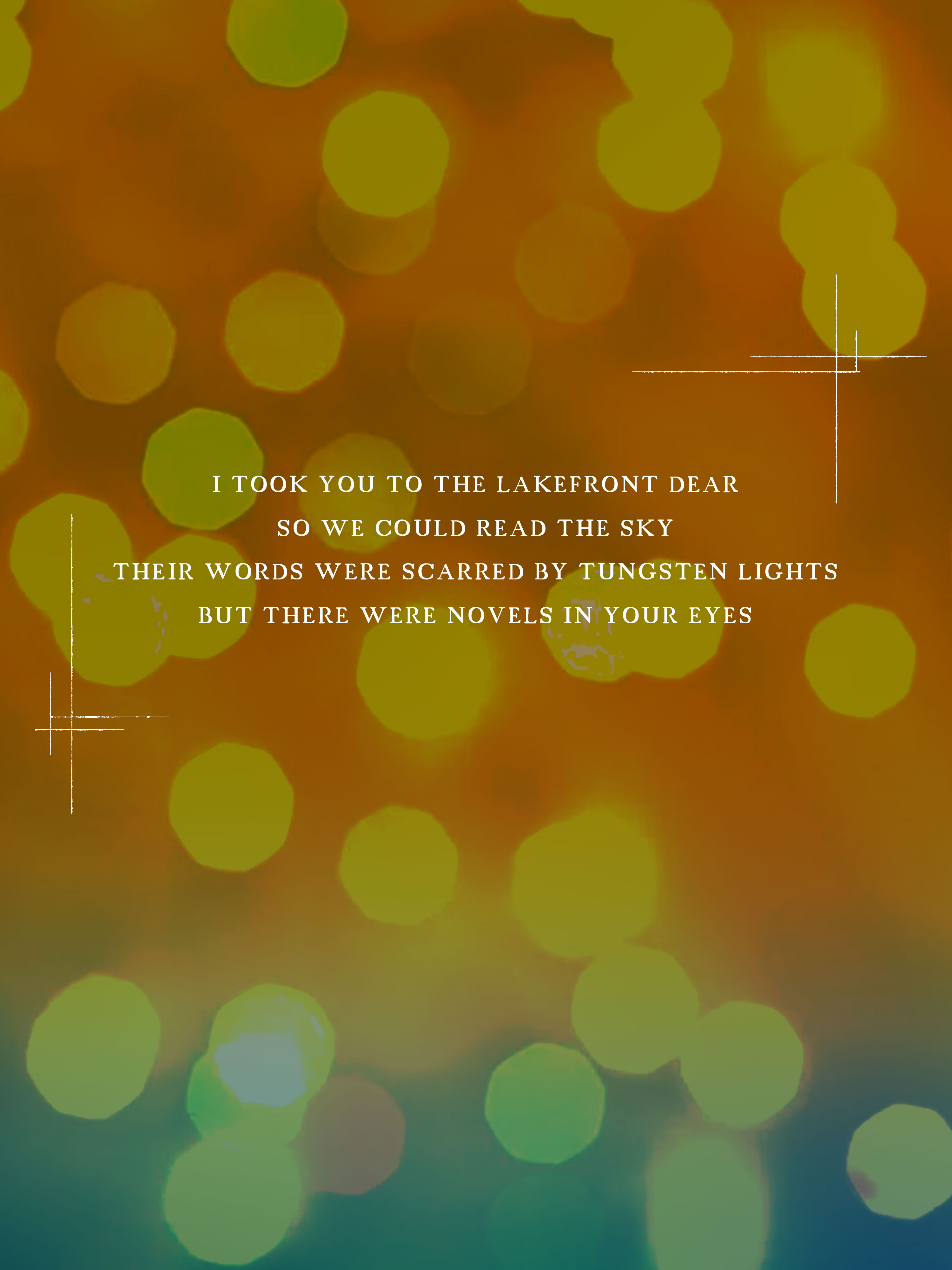




NNXXI

*THERE IS NO PEACE FOR THE LIVING  
ONLY WELL-FUNDED IGNORANCE*



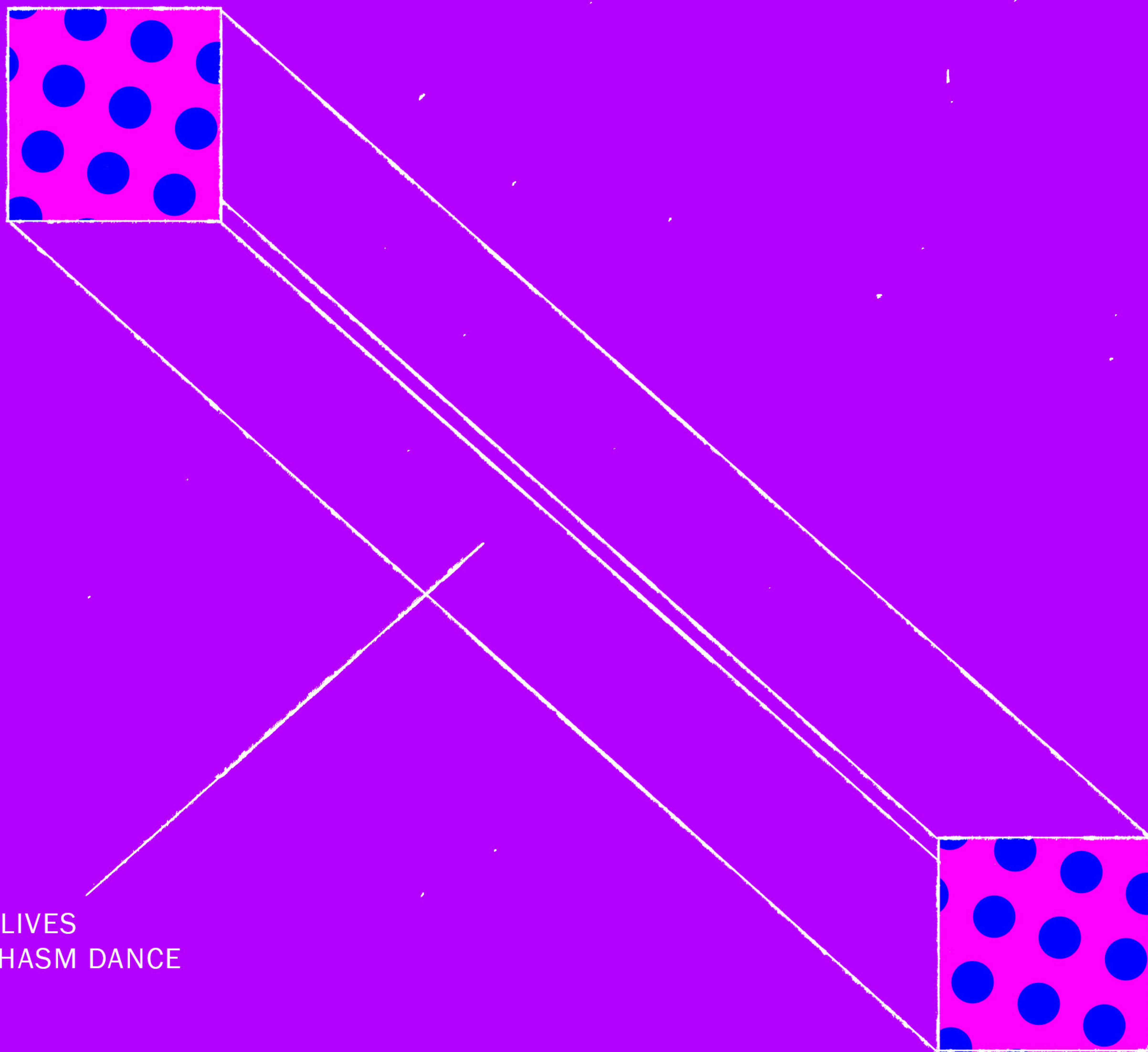


I TOOK YOU TO THE LAKEFRONT DEAR  
SO WE COULD READ THE SKY  
THEIR WORDS WERE SCARRED BY TUNGSTEN LIGHTS  
BUT THERE WERE NOVELS IN YOUR EYES





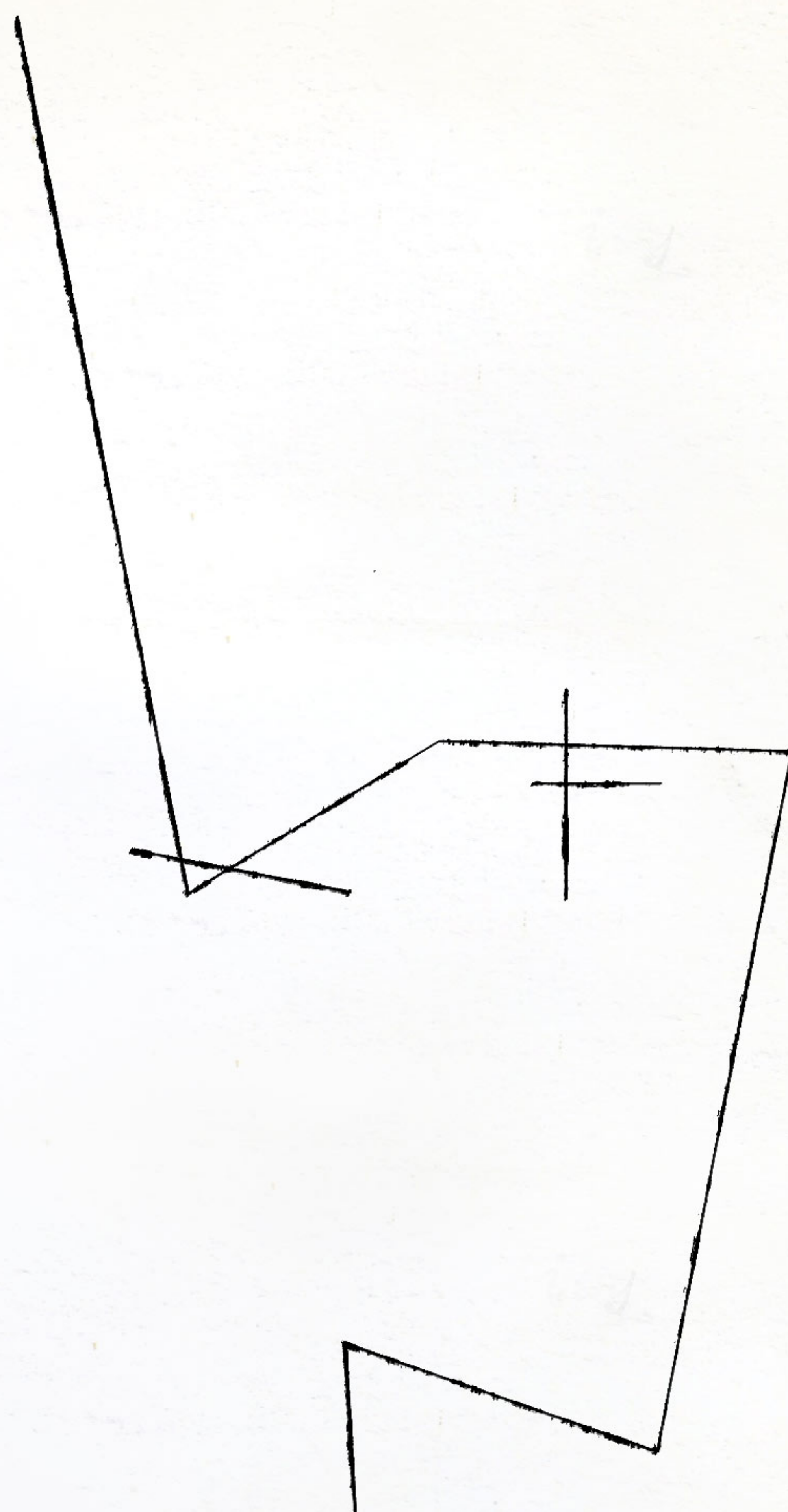
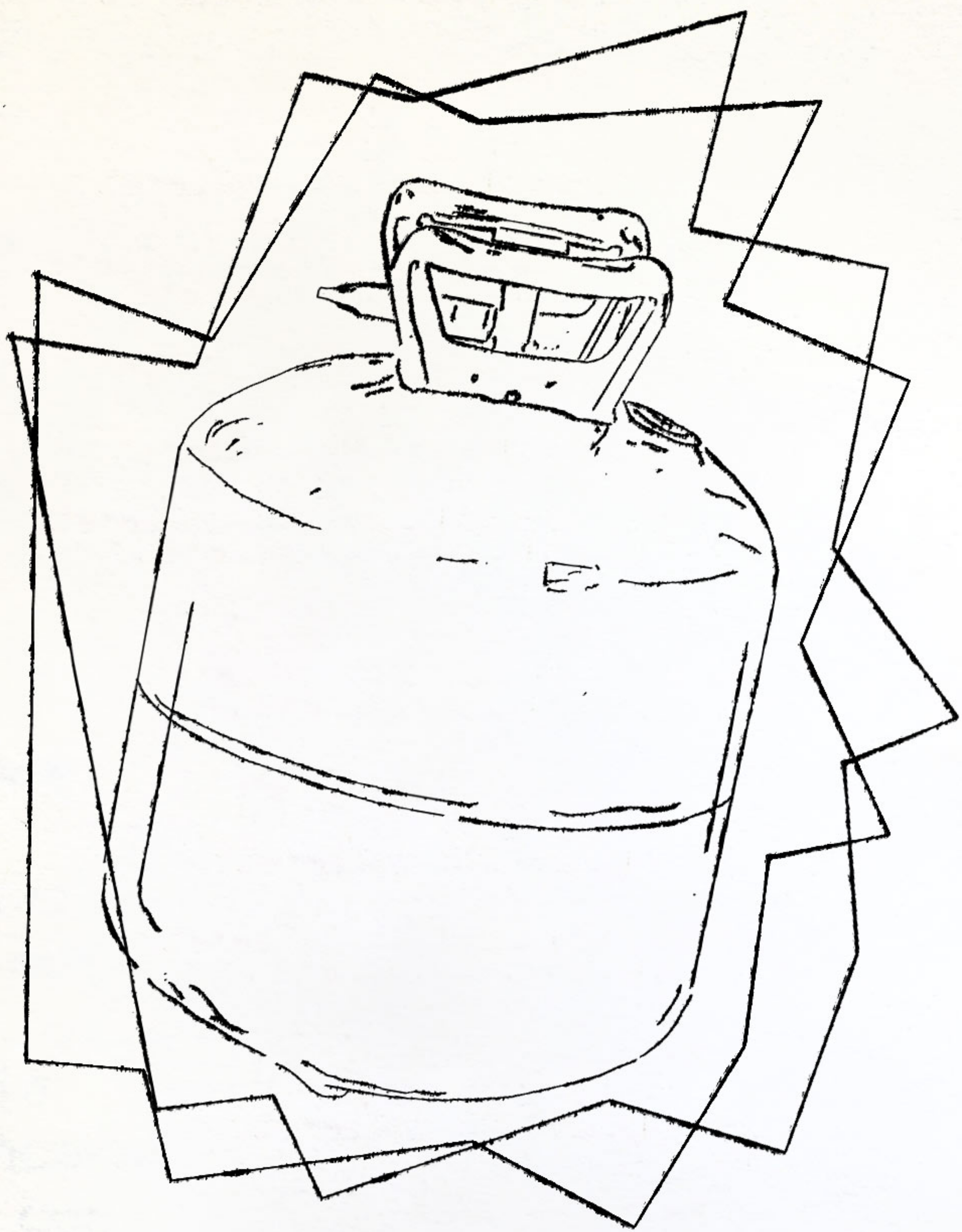
*WHEN ENOUGH ACID IS ENOUGH ACID*



HERE LIVES  
THE CHASM DANCE

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN WHEN I  
SAY THAT I'M EATING TOMORROW THE DAY  
BEFORE YESTERDAY?







the last thing a liberated mind has to say

**SPLATTER!!!**

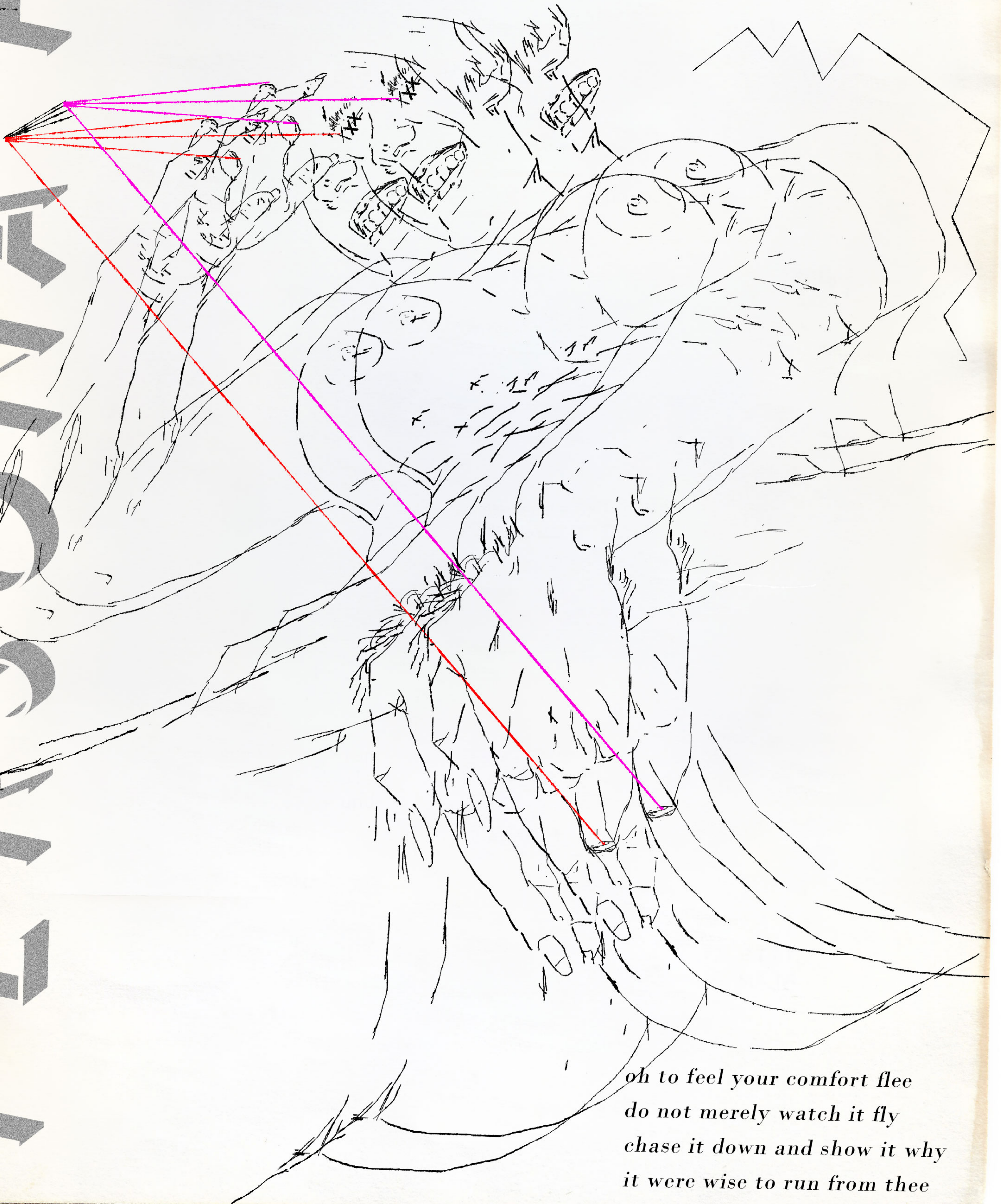
now intuit that for eons  
and murder for its meanings



# TEETH

to be perfectly explicit

perversion of semiotics



oh to feel your comfort flee  
do not merely watch it fly  
chase it down and show it why  
it were wise to run from thee



W E T U M B L E D  
I N E A C H  
O T H E R ' S  
S H A P E S  
L I K E T H E  
P R O L I F I C  
C O U P L I N G  
O F  
S T U P I D I T Y  
A N D  
C O N F I D E N C E



non nude aphorism 22

the bad sleep well  
and the worst not at all

non nude aphorism 23

we are the things born on the  
doorstep of rapturous peace  
doing our damndest to die  
before noting the knob

non nude aphorism 24

there are no villains  
only inadequate public relations

non nude aphorism 25

i do not need to agree  
with the direction of the wind  
to know that it blows regardless

non nude aphorism 26

we only truly learn to love the idol  
through the haze of their smoky wreck

non nude aphorism 27

the fundamental american instinct  
is to send bullets when ballots misfire

non nude aphorism 28

anxiety eats on history's rot

non nude aphorism 29

we are the scales that weigh themselves  
with each our babble metrics  
with each our hands on the pan

non nude aphorism 30

the ghost is host inside us

non nude aphorism 31

mastery is a nudge when a shove would do quicker

non nude aphorism 32

it's one thing they're born high up  
but why also miles ahead

non nude aphorism 33

poetry is what's whittled down  
from threadbare

non nude aphorism 34

i do not know what it is  
but that words are its dillution

non nude aphorism 35

if we are god's facsimile  
either the toner's running thin  
or the terror is justified

non nude aphorism 36

the butchers  
the boxers  
and the poets  
swing with the same intimacy

non nude aphorism 37

the first concession  
is seldom the final



AND NO ONE WAKED  
THAT THE HATRED  
WOULD NOT FADE  
BUT BECOME KEFIND  
AND PRESENT WITH  
FLOWY NOTES



non nude aphorism 38

we are the  
orphans of  
modernity's  
culling



# TIMESHARES OF THE DECONSTRUCTED MAN

PLEASE HELP  
Homeless

NO FOOD  
NO MONEY

GOD  
Bless

THANK  
YOU



Prepared on a table before me rests a VHS copy of a Betamax recording converted from 8mm film. *A whisper of burnt rubber nearby.* The scene the tape contains begins with a static shot of a jungle, the foliage swaying under a patina of condensation barely noticeable in the fuzz of resolution lost. The Foley brittle and muffled still lends the land a heft it purported to possess when the footage was first shot. Footsteps off-screen. *Boots squelch in mud like the smacking lips of turgid swine. Leaves hiss off Army greens and just enough branches crack to lend the scene the original's credibility.*

He appears first from the left. The screen expands to 4:3 and sticks with a resolution of 1080p. He is soaked everywhere that can be. His uniform tatters. His skin a patchwork of rash and stink. Across the brow of his helmet a nickname scrawled that tested well and impressed one man enough for him to belch *AUTHENTIC!* between greedy bites of complimentary Domino's. The soldier scans the land like a meerkat from Omaha who only just learned the taste a woman leaves in the back of your mouth and is desperate not to forget. His lips part. He oscillates the leaves that conceal either nothing or death with bugs the between. In a bonewhite script that takes up half the screen it says "Vietnam, 1963." The soldier ducks for no reason and avoids crashing into the title card. The director objected to its inclusion but was convinced by a gaggle of executives that the 85 IQs needed the historical prompting for fear that they would become confused before the dissection started.

The soldier's M14 is now referred to in the script as an erection angled between the tits of the sky. There are red and yellow beads around his neck, a parting gift from young Sarah or Sharon or whichever baby name was most contagious to mothers two decades back. He is alone and lost. To sooth himself he whispers that just beyond that next wall of brush is the movie theater where Sarah or Sharon first intertwined her leg with his. And when he yawned ten minutes after the call to action she dropped her popcorn and slid her hand up his thigh and he will never forget the adoration her fingers gave after the credits or the unbearable sweetness of hugging her hip on the walk home. *The sweetness is abruptly torn by a strange whooping from overhead, to the East it seems, or is it to the West.* As he continues across the screen the camera now peels back, unlayering a menagerie of hostile greens that jitter undulations, matched only by the sinewed shoulders of his fellow soldiers as they choke the Charlies out.



As he reads the trees and marches tepidly a terrible click marks the end of mystique from beneath his right knee. He is nude now, the uniform of tatters smoking in a pile one hundred feet away. His pale skin is harsh against the green, shimmering like diamond dust in the disgust of the firelight. All undulations slow and cease. He imagines a mosquito seven feet away with eyes on a last meal losing its wings in a blitz that looked to it of stained glass splintered into strings. The trees are still. The forest is silence. The soldier's skin is snatched away and hangs all billowed behind him like a plastic bag in a swimming pool. He thinks of Christmas morning four years back and the pile of discarded wrapping paper shimmering with green and gold edges in the light of the fireplace. This layer of discarded skin is later scooped up along the edge of a paddy, then tanned and stretched and sold to Baby Boomers as

Je Su<sub>s</sub> Chri<sup>ST</sup> wi<sup>TH</sup>  
b LU<sub>e</sub> E Ye S

The purple flesh now unwrapped stands there in a stupid pose, vessels bulging with greasy sheen, arms out, a thing that if you saw it you would think it some eldritch beast escaped from nightmare, pulsing at the groin, at the underarms, at the neck, pulsing in a desperate rhythm, the heart beating as if to abandon the vessel, as if to warn of invaders after sleeping at the lookout. The Vitruvian man made of concord grape, muscles cramping in the sunlight, the yellow glisten of fat melting and sloughing off its canvas of dying meat. This grotesque art, this layer of man stiff in a slice of time, was later mulched and bottled and sold to obese children as

C o C<sup>A</sup>- c O la C<sub>l</sub>a S<sub>s</sub>i C

A sucking sound from inside the abomination as the flesh tears and the bones sneak out in white intrusions. With the ochre rainbow of organs their accomplice the skeleton shucks free in a wet leap. The bone's are the white of teeth. The white of porcelain. The third presentation in this abysmal parade.



It struggles to stand. The eyes are frantic, blinded by fire and light. The intestines shimmer in palsied contractions. Yellow, white, purple. Squirming in orgy. In stink. He is agony. The teeth chitter and crack in ugly rattles. This layer is later plastinated and posed and sold to investors as

# A M<sup>c</sup>D<sup>o</sup>n A<sup>l</sup>D<sup>'</sup>S in ToKYo

Now the snap of bone as the skeleton begins to teeter. *Splitting sounds echo hollow and horrible.* The skull jettisons in shards that embed in nearby trees. Vertebrae shoot out like shrapnel. A humerus beheads a beetle at impossible speed. The metacarpals crash like dice a thousand feet away. The bones decoupled now unveil the pale ribbing of the brain beneath. It spasms in the new sunlight, squirming under the blanket of meninges like a war of maggots. Free from restraints the brain floats there in the jungle, trailing a thick chord on its underside. At measured intervals the chord sprouts tendrils of beige thread that float out as some sea creature skimming for prey in the fathomless deep. It slithers in a dream weave. The world theater unmasked. The stage and the playwright and the overcompensating critic hovering in the stench of the jungle. This last layer the foundation of man, all actions a cluster of neural firing, all histories manifest, all potentials. This masterwork of eons is later dried and pestled and sold in capsule form to Chinese tourists as

# an ER ECtiOn fRoM yOuR eArLy TeenS



The screen freezes. *An advertisement for an online master's degree in health care management begins to play. The ad blocker wakes and clicks its teeth and the racially diverse group of poorly paid actors scurry away to haunt a nearby Minecraft video.* The screen is now black. Buffering. Behind the blind the soldier comes together again. The brain and its stem collect the scattered bones and remake home. The muscles stitch the slithers back and insert into the origin. The skin resheathes and the tatters return to thread the final stitch. The soldier sways in the heat and tastes the sky in the back of his throat. He looks down. Beneath his boot are half-buried tins, the loudest an empty ration can of ham and lima beans from Boston. He leaves it and walks beyond the next wall of brush and there is nothing there save the pixelated weight of a cardboard sign in his right hand 30 years from now.

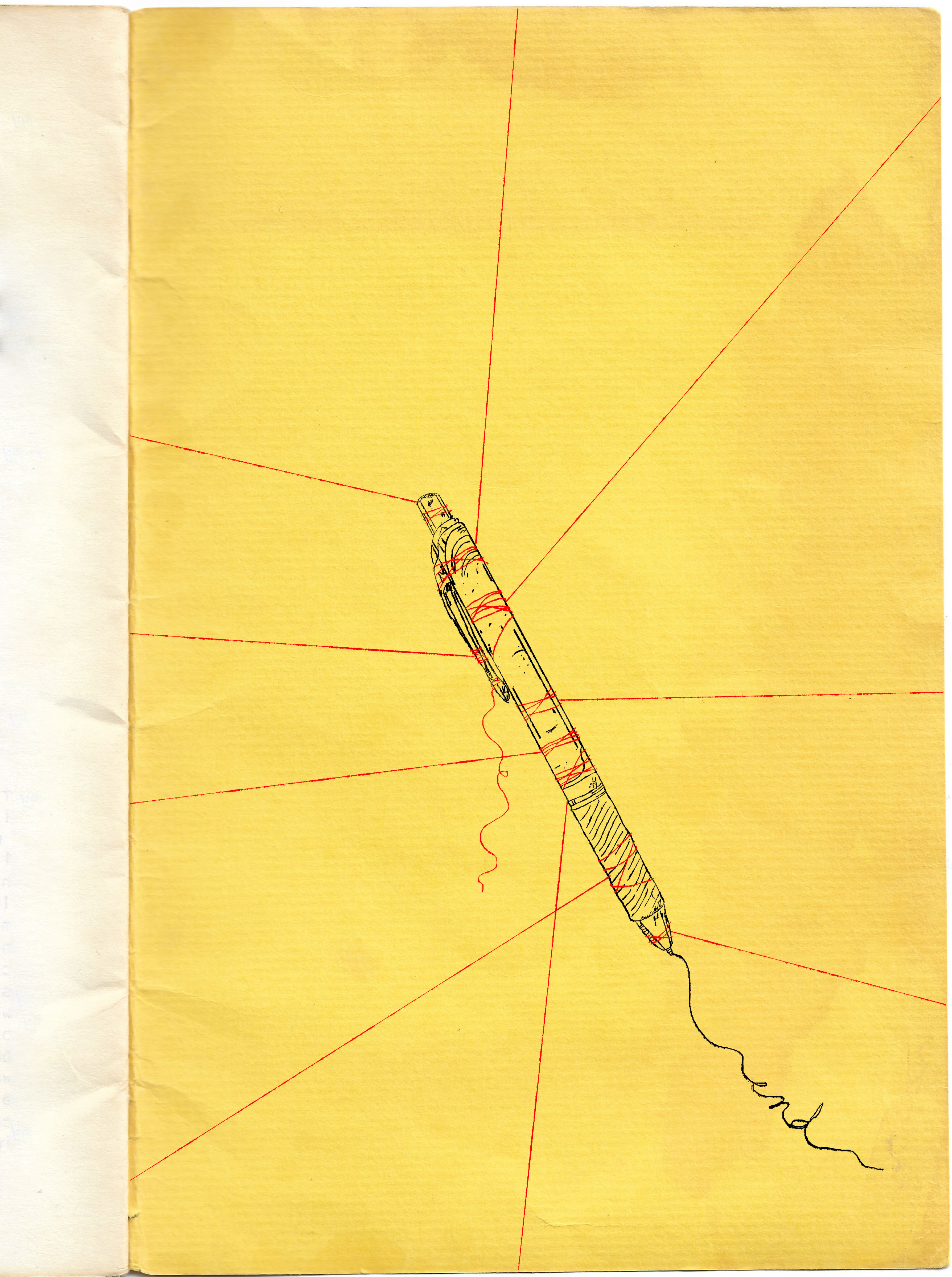


if nothing else, this



TIME The  
CHARIOT  
LANGUAGE ≡  
THE COURSE







UsE tHesE bONEs

tO MaKE A

HomE